











S A M O R,  
LORD OF THE BRIGHT CITY.

---

AN HEROIC POEM.

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BY

THE REV. H. H. MILMAN, M. A.  
FELLOW OF BRAZENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
AND  
VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, READING

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SECOND EDITION.

LONDON

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JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1818.

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THE REV. H. N. MILLMAN, M.A.

RECTOR OF BRANFORD COLLEGE, OXFORD.  
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Annex

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\_\_\_\_\_ et o ! modo spiritus adsit,  
Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges.

Milton. Mansus.

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\_\_\_\_\_ the better fortitude  
Of patience and heroic martyrdom.

Milton's Par. Lost, Book IX.

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## PREFACE.

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of 1 mode writing with

The Historians of the Empire near the period of time, at which this poem commences, make mention of a Constantine, who assumed the purple of the western empire, gained possession of Gaul and Spain, but was defeated and slain at the battle of Arles. He had a son named Constant, who became a monk, and was put to death at Vienna.

About the same time a Constantine appears in the relations of the old British Chronicles and Romances. He was brother of the king of Armenia, and became himself King, or rather



## P R E F A C E.

THE Historians\* of the Empire near the period of time, at which this Poem commences, make mention of a Constantine, who assumed the purple of the western empire, gained possession of Gaul and Spain, but was defeated and slain at the battle of Arles. He had a son named Constans, who became a monk, and was put to death at Vienne.

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\* Gibbon, Chap. 31.



an elected sovereign of the petty Kings of Britain,\* who continued their succession under the Roman dominion. He was called Vendigard† and Waredur, the Defender and Deliverer. He had three sons, Constans, who became a hermit, and was murdered, either (for the traditions vary) by the Picts, by Vortigern, or by the Saxons; Emrys, called by the Latin writers Aurelius Ambrosius; and Uther Pendragon, the father of Arthur. These two Constantines are here identified, and Vortigern supposed to have been named King of Britain, as the person of greatest authority and conduct in the wreck of the British army, defeated at Arles. Many, however, of the chiefs in the Island advancing the hereditary right, before formally settled on the sons of Constantine, Vortigern, mistrusting the Britons, and prest by invasions of the Caledonians, introduced the Saxons to check the barbarians and strengthen his own sovereignty.

\* Whitaker, Hist. of Manchester.

† Lewis, Hist. of Britain.

The Hero of the Poem is an historical character, as far as such legends can be called History. He appears in most of the Chronicles, as Edol, or Eldol, but the fullest account of his exploits is in Dugdale's Baro-nage under his title of Earl of Gloucester. William Harrison, however, in the Description of Britain prefixed to Holinshed, calls him Eldulph de Samor. But all concur in ascribing to him the acts which make the chief subject of the fifth and last Books of this Poem.

Most of our present names of places being purely Saxon, and the old British having little of harmony or association to recommend them, I have frequently, on the authority of Camden and others, translated them. Thus the Saxon Gloucester, called by the Britons, *Caer Gloew*, is the Bright City. The Dobuni, the inhabitants of the Vales, are called by that name. Some few sanctioned by old usage of Poetry and Romance I retain, as Kent, Thanet, Cornwall. London is *Troynovant*, as the City of the Trinobantes.

Some passages in the Poem will be easily traced to their acknowledged sources, the Poets of Greece and Italy ; one however, in the third book, relating to the Northern mythology, has been remarkably anticipated in a modern Poem. The honourable Author may be assured that the coincidence is unintentional, as that part of this Poem was the earliest written, and previous to the appearance of his production.



# SAMOR.

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## BOOK I.

LAND of my birth, oh Britain ! and my love,  
Whose air I breathe, whose earth I tread, whose tongue  
My song would speak, its strong and solemn tones  
Most proud, if I abase not. Beauteous Isle,  
And plenteous ! what though in thy atmosphere 5  
Float not the taintless luxury of light,  
The dazzling azure of the Southern skies ;  
Around thee the rich orb of thy renown  
Spreads stainless and unsullied by a cloud.  
Though thy hills blush not with the purple vine, 10  
And softer climes excel thee in the hue

And fragrance of thy summer fruits and flowers,  
Nor flow thy rivers over golden beds ;  
Thou in the Soul of man, thy better wealth,  
Art richest : nature's noblest produce thou, 15  
The immortal Mind in perfect height and strength,  
Bear'st with a prodigal opulence ; this thy right,  
Thy privilege of climate and of soil,  
Would I assert : nor, save thy fame, invoke,  
Or Nymph, or Muse, that oft 'twas dream'd of old 20  
By falls of waters under haunted shades,  
Her extacy of inspiration pour'd  
O'er Poet's soul, and flooded all his powers  
With liquid glory : so may thy renown  
Burn in my heart, and give to thought and word  
The aspiring and the radiant hue of fire. 25

Forth from the gates of Troynovant hath past  
King Vortigern ; the Princes of the Isle  
Around him ; on the walls, for then (though now  
Scorn bounds her mighty wilderness of streets,  
And in magnificence of multitude 30  
Spread, and illimitable grandeur,) walls  
With jealous circuit and embattled range



Girt Britain's narrow Capital; where swarm'd  
Eager her wondering citizens to see  
The Monarch. Him the Saxon Hengist met, 35  
And Horsa, with their bands in triumph led,  
As from a recent victory; their blue eyes  
Sparkled, and proud they shook their saffron hair;  
And in the bicker of their spears, the toss  
Of ponderous mallets, the quick flash of swords, 40  
Th' emblazon'd White Horse on their banners waved,  
Was triumph. Thus King Vortigern began:

“ Welcome, Deliverers! of our kingdom's foes,  
Welcome, thrice-honour'd Conquerors! never more  
Shall painted Caledonian o'er our realm 45  
The chariots of his rapine wheel, so full  
The desolation, havoc so complete  
Hath smote and blasted in Erle Hengist's path.  
The mouldering ruins of our Roman wall,  
Leagued with the terror of the Saxon name, 50  
Shall be defence more mighty, than when soared  
Its battlements unbroken, and above  
The imperial Eagle shook its wings of gold.  
Oh, toil'd with victory, burthen'd with renown,

For ye our baths float cool and clear, our air 55  
Is redolent with garland wreathes, and rich  
Within our royal citadel is crown'd  
For ye the banquet ; welcome once again,  
Mighty to save, and potent to defend !"—  
A faint acclaim, a feeble sullen din 60  
Ensued, with less of gladness than fierce grief,  
And wrath ill stifled. Seeming all unmoved,  
Elate the Monarch onward led the way ;  
Slow follow'd Saxon Hengist's martial train,  
Clashing their armour loud, as they would daunt 65  
All Britain with the clamour : march'd behind  
The island Nobles, save some restless hands  
Were busy with their sheathed swords, they mov'd  
Silent, and cold, and gloomy, as a range  
Of mountain pines, when cloudy lowers the storm. 70

Upon the azure bosom of the Thames  
Reclining, with its ponderous mass of shade,  
Arose the royal Citadel, the work  
Of the great Cæsar. Danger he and dread  
Of Rome and Pompey ; yet 'gainst savage foes 75  
Vantage of trench and tower and massy wall

Scorn'd not, so swift, so perilous, so fierce  
Cassivelan his painted charioteers  
Whirl'd to the frantic onset, standing forth  
Portent of freedom mid a world enslav'd. 80

They pass'd the portal arch; the sumptuous hall  
Flung back its gates; around the banquet board  
Rang'd Prince and Chieftain, where luxurious art  
Shower'd prodigal her dainties, poisons sweet,  
And baleful splendour. Fierce the Saxon gaz'd, 85

On goblet, and huge charger carved with gold,  
Contemptuous wonder. But the Monarch's brow  
'Gan lighten, as with greedy joy he quaff'd  
Oblivious bliss; thus ever guilty soul

Woos frenzy, and, voluptuous from despair,  
Forgets itself to pleasure. High aloof,  
Each in his azure robe, the band of Bards

Mingled the wanton luxuries of sound;  
Gentle melodious languor, melting fall,  
With faint effeminate flattery the soul 95

Guiling of manhood. Silent veil'd his harp  
White-hair'd Aneurin, and indignant tears  
Stood in the old man's eye, for wrathful shame

To hear his godlike and heaven-breathing art  
Pampering loose revels with officious chime. 100  
Then rose the glorious madness ; forth he sprung,  
With one rude stroke along the clashing chords  
Won silence deep as of a summer eve  
After a noontide storm ; his silver locks  
Wav'd proud, the kindling frenzy of his eye 105  
Flash'd triumph, as the song of Chariots rose.  
The song that o'er the van of battle shower'd  
Pale horror, when that scourg'd Icenian Queen  
Through the square legions drove her car ; were heard  
Her brazen wheels to madden, the keen scythes 110  
Gride through their iron harvest ; then rush'd route,  
Wail'd havoc ; seem'd Bonduca fiercer urg'd  
The trampling steeds ; behind her silence sank  
Along the dreary path of her revenge.

Ceas'd the bold strain, then deep the Saxon drain'd  
The ruddy cup, and savage joy uncouth 116  
Lit his blue gleaming eyes : nor sate unmov'd  
The Briton Chiefs ; fierce thoughts began to rise  
Of ancient wars, and high ancestral fame.  
Sudden came floating through the hall an air 120



So strangely sweet, the o'erwrought sense scarce felt  
Its rich excess of pleasure ; softer sounds  
Melt never on the enchanted midnight cool,  
By haunted spring, where elfin dancers trace  
Green circlets on the moonlight dew ; nor lull 125  
Becalmed mariner from rocks, where basks  
At summer noon the Sea-maid ; he his oar  
Breathless suspends, and motionless his bark  
Sleeps on the sleeping waters. Now the notes  
So gently died away, the silence seem'd 130  
Melodious ; merry now and light and blithe  
They danced on air : anon came tripping forth  
In frolic grace a maiden troop, their locks  
Flower-wreath'd, their snowy robes from clasped zone  
Fell careless drooping, quick their glittering feet 135  
Glanc'd o'er the pavement. Then the pomp of sound  
Swell'd up, and mounted ; as the stately swan,  
Her milk-white neck embower'd in arching spray,  
Queens it along the waters, entered in  
The lofty hall a shape so fair, it lull'd 140  
The music into silence, yet itself  
Pour'd out, prolonging the soft extacy,



The trembling and the touching of sweet sound.  
Her grace of motion and of look, the smooth  
And swimming majesty of step and tread, 145  
The symmetry of form and feature, set  
The soul afloat, even like delicious airs  
Of flute or harp: as though she trod from earth,  
And round her wore an emanating cloud  
Of harmony, the Lady mov'd. Too proud 150  
For less than absolute command, too soft  
For aught but gentle amorous thought: her hair  
Cluster'd, as from an orb of gold cast out  
A dazzling and o'erpowering radiance, save  
Here and there on her snowy neck repos'd  
In a sooth'd brilliance some thin wandering tress. 155  
The azure flashing of her eye was fring'd  
With virgin meekness, and her tread, that seem'd  
• Earth to disdain, as softly fell on it  
As the light dew-shower on a tuft of flowers.  
The soul within seem'd feasting on high thoughts, 160  
That to the outward form and feature gave  
A loveliness of scorn, scorn that to feel  
Was bliss, was sweet indulgence. Fast sank bank

Those her fair harbingers, their modest eyes,  
Downcast, and drooping low their slender necks 165  
In graceful reverence ; she, by wond'ring gaze  
Unmov'd, and stifled murmurs of applause,  
Nor yet unconscious, slowly won her way  
To where the King, amid the festal pomp,  
Sate loftiest ; as she rais'd a fair-chas'd cup, 170  
Something of sweet confusion overspread  
Her features ; something tremulous broke in  
On her half-failing accents as she said,  
“ Health to the King ! ” — the sparkling wine laugh'd up,  
As eager 'twere to touch so fair a lip. 175

A moment, and the apparition bright  
Had parted ; as before the sound of harps  
Was wantoning about the festive hall.

As one just waking from a blissful dream  
Nor moves, nor breathes, lest breath or motion break 180  
The beauteous tissue of fine form woven o'er  
His fancy, sate King Vortigern. “ Whence came,  
And whither went she ? of what race and stem  
Sprang this bright wonder of our earth, that leaves  
The rapture of her presence in our hall, 185

Though parted thence too swiftly ?"—“ King (replied  
Erle Hengist)—in our ancient Saxon faith,  
Ill bodes the joyless feast, where maiden’s lips  
Pledge not the wassail goblet.”—“ By my soul,”  
Cried Vortigern, “ a gallant faith ! and I 190  
Omen so sweet discredit not ; the health  
Those smooth lips wish’d me, well those lips might give,  
A fragrance and a sparkling have they left  
Even on the wine they touch’d.” He said, and prest  
The goblet to his own. “ A father’s ear, 195  
King Vortigern, must love the flattering tongue  
That descants lavish on his daughter’s praise.”  
“ Thy daughter ? Saxon !”—“ Mine, though vaunt not I  
Her beauty, many a German Erle and King  
Hath vow’d at his life’s peril to proclaim 200  
Her far-surpassing comeliness.”—None heard  
The secret converse that ensued. Lo, rose  
King Vortigern, and from his brow transferr’d  
A coronet of radiant Eastern gems  
To the white hair of Hengist, and drank off 205  
A brimming cup, and cried, “ To Kent’s high King,  
A health, a health to Vortigern’s fair bride,

The golden-hair'd Rowena."—Seiz'd at once  
Each Saxon the exulting strain, and struck  
The wine-drain'd goblet down, "Health, King of Kent!"

As mid the fabled Libyan bridal stood 211  
Perseus, in stern tranquillity of wrath,  
Half stood, half floated on his ancle plumes  
Out-swelling, while the bright face on his shield  
Look'd into stone the raging fray; so rose, 215  
But with no magic arms, wearing alone  
Th' appalling and control of his firm look,  
The solemn indignation of his brow,  
The Briton Samor; at his rising, awe  
Went abroad, and the riotous hall was mute; 220  
But like unruffled summer waters flow'd  
His speech, and courtly reverence smooth'd its tone.

"Sovereign of Britain's Sovereigns! of our crowns  
The highest! in our realm of many thrones  
Enthron'd the loftiest! mighty as thou art, 225  
Thou dost outstep thy amplitude of sway;  
Thine is our isle to govern not to give;  
A free and sacred property hast thou  
In our allegiance; for a master's right



Over our lives, our pryncedoms, and our souls, 230  
King Vortigern. as well mayst thou presume  
To a dominion o'er our winds, to set  
Thy stamp and impress on our light from heaven.  
This Britain cannot rest beneath the shade  
Of Saxon empire, this our Christian soil. 235  
The harvest of obedience will not bear  
To Heathen sway ; and hear me, Vortigern,  
The golden image that thou settest up,  
Like the pride-drunken Babylonian king,  
Though dulcimer and psaltery soothe us down 240  
To the soft humour of submission tame,  
We will not worship."—From the hall he past,  
Thus saying. Him the Island's brave and proud  
Follow'd, the high and fame-enamour'd souls,  
Never to Britain wanting, though in hours 245  
Loosest of revels soft, and wanton ease.  
But Vortigern, more largely pouring in  
The vine's delicious poison, sate, and cried,  
" Whom the flax binds not, must the iron gyve,  
Whom sceptres daunt not, must the sword control."

Evening fell gentle, and the brilliant sun 251



Was going down into the waveless Thames,  
As bearing light and warmth to her cold Nymphs  
Within their crystal chambers, when the King  
Left the hall of banquet. Lofty and alone, 255  
Even as the Pillar great Alcides set,  
The limit of the world and his renown,  
On Calpe, round whose shaft the daylight wreathed  
Its last empurpling, on the battlements  
Stood Samor in the amethystine light, 260  
And “Go to darkness, thou majestic orb !  
To-morrow shall the nations bask again  
In thy full glory.”—Thus he said, and turn’d  
To where the King went rapid past.—“And thou,  
Thou to thy setting hastest, never more 265  
Thou thy benighted splendour to renew ;  
Late at thy noon of pride, now sunk, declin’d  
For ever from thy fair meridian go,  
Into thy cloudy rest !”—The solemn tone  
Of his deep voice seized on the King, as frosts 270  
Arrest the rapid flowing stream.—“What means  
The Sovereign of the Vales, even in my halls,  
And on my castle battlements, to cast

Bold scorn on Britain's King? Ingrate and blind,  
When I the valiant Saxon have brought in 275  
To check the Caledonian, through your isle  
Marching by wild light of your burning towns;  
Ye, wedded to your sorrow and your shame,  
Mock at the safety my free love provides."

"Ah, provident! ah, sage! ah, generous King! 280  
That sets the emaciate wolf to dog the flock;  
The hawk to guard the dovecote."—"Wise-lipp'd chief,  
I thank thee for thy phrase: doves are ye, doves  
That fly with piteous and most delicate speed  
Before the Scottish kites, that swoop your nests, 285  
And flesh their greedy talons in your young."—

"Monarch! the eaglet, were it smoothly nurst  
In the dove's downy nest, at its first flight  
Would shrink down dazzled from the morning sun;  
But with strong plumes refresh'd, anon 'twould claim  
Its old aspiring birthright, and unblench'd 291  
Bathe in the bickering of the noontide car.

Oh, we have slumber'd on soft luxury's lap  
To her loose tabret; but, misjudging King!  
Britain is like her soil; above the turf 295

Lies velvet smooth, hard iron lurks beneath,  
I know the northern Pagans waste our land,  
And the tame mission to the Roman sent  
I know, 'The fierce Barbarian to the sea  
Drives us, the sea to the Barbarian back 300  
Merciless': so ran the plaintive legend. True!  
But soldiers would it cast us back; despair  
Hath its own valour; war makes warriors. King!  
Calamities are on us, evil days  
O'er our isle darken, but the noble wear 305  
Disaster, as an Angel wears his wings,  
To elevate and glorify. Nor us  
Shroudeth alone the enveloping gloom, the frame  
And fabric of our world is breaking up.  
Rome's dome of empire, that o'ervaulted earth 310  
With its capacious shadow, rent and split,  
Disorders the smooth course of human things,  
Leaving confusion lord of this wide ball,  
While to and fro the Nations' sway perplex'd,  
Like a tempestuous sea. Oh, mid such wreck, 315  
Our Britain in lone safety to uphold,  
On every side 'gainst gathering foes present

A rampire of hard steel, or firmer far,  
The bulwark of a haughty spirit pour'd  
From the thron'd Sovereign through her sons, were pride,  
Were honour, might arrest Heaven's plumed hosts 321  
And in their sphere-born music win renown.

So He whose sceptre glitters in thy grasp,  
He the Deliverer, the Defender nam'd,  
So Constantine had done, had the high Soul's bane, 325  
Ambition, never maddened him to wear  
The purple, madly worn, yet nobly lost

On the sad plain by Arles."—" I knew, I knew  
'Twould come to this, that Constantine would end  
The high-wrought orat'ry. This too I know, 330

And this I tell thee, Samor! nor yet add  
Rebel! thy secret commerce with his sons,  
To undermine my stately throne; the right,  
So babble ye in your licentious phrase,  
Conferr'd by our assembled British Kings 335

On Constantine for ever and his heirs."—

" Alas! how better were it to know nought,  
Than, like Kings, darkly. Constantine's brave sons  
And Samor oft have met, have met to wail



The hazard of their native land, to swear 340  
Before the altar of the eternal God,  
Never, amid these rude and perilous times,  
To blow the trump of civil strife, to prop  
With their allegiance Britain's throne, though fill'd  
By one they deem usurping. Vortigern! 345  
I am upon the string that jars thy soul,  
And it must vibrate to its highest pitch.  
Oh what a royal madness, that might build  
Upon the strong rock of a people's love,  
Yet chooseth the loose quicksand of distrust, 350  
And overlays the palace of his pride  
With a rude Saxon buttress, whose stern weight  
Must crush it. Thou dost fear thy subjects arm'd,  
Fear, lest the old valiance in their hearts inure,  
And therefore fight'st their wars with foreign steel; 355  
And is this he, the noble and the wise,  
The Vortigern, that Britain on the plain  
Of Arles, that fatal plain, hail'd Captain, King?  
Arise, be King, be Captain, be thyself!  
And we will stand around thy throne, and mock 360  
The ruinous fashion of the times."—" Away!

My royal word is to the Saxon given."  
" Oh, Vortigern ! this knee hath never bow'd,  
Save to the King of Kings, thus low on earth,  
I sue thee, cast the Saxon off."—At once 365  
The swift contagious grandeur set on fire,  
The Monarch—" I am thine, am Britain's all :  
Now by my throne, thus, thus I have not felt,  
Since first this circling gold eat in my brow,  
So free, so upright, and so kingly, chains 370  
Fall from me, mists are curling off my soul."

Like two bold Venturers, silently they stand,  
Launching amid the sun-light their rich bark  
O'er glassy waters to the summer airs :  
Their solemn pondering hath the lofty look 375  
Of vaunting, over each high brow flames out  
A noble rivalry of hope and pride.

The sound of wheels, lo, sliding came and smooth  
A car, wherein, like some fair idol led  
Through the mute tumult of adoring streets, 380  
Bright-hair'd Rowena pass'd the portal arch.  
Have ye a sense, ye gales, a conscious joy  
In beauty, that with such an artful touch

And light ye float about her garment folds,  
Displaying what is exquisite display'd,  
And thinly scattering the light veil where'er  
Its shadowing may enhance the grace, and swell  
With sweet officiousness the clustering hair  
Where fairest tufts its richness, and let fall  
Where drooping most becomes; that thus ye love  
To lose yourselves about her, and expire  
Upon her shape, or snow-white robes? She stood,  
Her ivory arm in a soft curve stretch'd out,  
As only in the obedience of her steeds  
Rejoicing; they their necks arch'd proud and high,  
And by her delicate and flower-soft hands  
Sway'd, as enamour'd of her mastery mov'd,  
Lovingly on their bright-chaf'd bits repos'd,  
Or in gay sport upon each other fawn'd.  
But as the Monarch she beheld, she caught  
The slack rein up, and with unconscious check  
Delay'd the willing coursers, and her head,  
Upon her snowy shoulder half declin'd  
In languor of enjoyment, rising wore  
Rosy confusion, and disorder fair

Transiently on her pride of motion broke.  
Or chance, or meaning wander'd to his face  
Her eye, with half command, entreating half;  
Haughty to all the world, but mild to him,  
Th' all admir'd admiring, and th' all awing awed— 410  
She look'd on him, and trembled as she look'd.

Alone she came, alone she went not on.



## BOOK II.

Noon is ablaze in Heaven, but gloom, the gloom  
Of the brown forest's massy vault of shade,  
Is o'er the Kings of Britain; the broad oaks,  
As in protection of that conclave proud,  
Like some old temple's dome, with mingling shade      5  
Meet overhead, around their rugged trunks  
Shew like fantastic pillars closely set  
By Druids in mysterious circle, wont  
Here, when the earth abroad was bright and clear  
With moonshine, to install their midnight rites      10  
By blue nor earthly kindled fires, while Bards  
Pour'd more than music from their charmed harps.  
Each on his mossy seat, in arms that cast  
A glimmer which is hardly light, they sit

Colossal, stern, and still ; on every brow 15

Indignant sorrow and sad vengeance lowers.

Them had the Pagan peasant deem'd his Gods,

In cloudy wrath down stooping from the heavens

To blast the mighty of mankind, and wreak

On some old empire ruin and revenge. 20

And first majestic, yet mild, arose

A lofty shape, nor less than monarch seem'd,

Whose royal look from souls bold, brave, and free,

Not stooping slavery claim'd, but upright awe

And noble homage ; yet uncrown'd he wore 25

Dominion, him with stately reverence heard

That armed Senate. “ Princes of the land,

Lords of the old hereditary thrones

Of Britain, we, the sons of Constantine,

Emrys and Uther, come not here to charge 30

Inconstant counsel on your wisdom, nought

Arraigning, that the sceptre to our line

Solemnly given, in those disastrous days,

When for the Empire of the Occident,

For Gaul o'er-master'd, and submitted Spain, 35

Warr'd Constantine, and warring nobly fell,

Ye placed in elder hand, our right foregone  
For the more precious public weal : oh, Chiefs,  
'Twas well and wisely done ; a stripling's arm  
May rear the kingly standard in its pomp 40  
To play with Zephyrs under cloudless skies,  
But when the rude storm shakes its ponderous folds,  
'Twere hard for less than the consummate man  
Aloft to bear it, yet unstooping. Well  
Stemm'd your new standard bearer Vortigern 45  
The o'ershadowing tempest, nor abas'd his front  
Your crown's old glories ; till, alas ! dire change !  
Dread fall ! the sceptre that ye fondly hoped,  
Would blossom, like the Hebrew Hierarch's rod,  
With the almond bloom of mercy and of love, 50  
Liker the Egyptian magic-worker's wand  
Became a serpent, withering all your peace  
With its infection : then your virtues wrought  
Your sorrows, from your valour grew your shame.  
Your borders were o'erleap'd, your towns on fire, 55  
And the land groan'd beneath fierce Rapine's wheels.  
Ye cried unto your King for arms, he sage  
In cold and jealous wisdom fear'd to arm,

Whose arms might brave himself, and cast control  
On the fierce wanderings of his royal will. 60  
Saxons must fight our wars, our hard-wrung gold  
Buy us ignoble safety, till the slaves  
Swell'd into Lords, and realms must pamper  
Our hirelings into Princes ; Kent, fair Kent,  
The frontlet of our isle, where yet are seen 65  
The graves great Cæsar peopled with his dead,  
When on his rear the Briton conqueror hung,  
Where first the Banner of the Cross was wav'd  
Sinks to a Heathen province. Warriors ! Kings !  
This must not be among baptized men, 70  
This cannot be 'mong Britons. Therefore here,  
Here in your presence dare we call again,  
Your throne our throne, and challenge in your love  
A Sovereign's title, by our youth we fell  
From that great height, but Vortigern hath fall'n 75  
By his own guilt, we therefore rise again  
In majesty renew'd ; he falls, no more  
To soar into the sacred royal seat."  
Thereat with concord loud, and stern acclaim,  
Gave answer that proud Senate, and denounc'd 80



Judgment irrevocable. But with mien  
Somewhat appall'd, as one in high debate  
And solemn council unassay'd, arose  
Prince Uther : ere he spake his clanging mail  
Smote with fierce stroke, as audience to enchain, 85  
Himself the battle sound enkindling, high  
His haughty brow and crested helm upflung,  
'Thus rude his fiery eloquence pour'd forth.

“ Warriors of Britain ! me nor pomp of words  
Beseems, nor strife of smooth and liquid phrase, 90  
In the debate of swords, the fray of steeds  
No combatant unskill'd. I will not boast  
That I have brook'd with Emrys' patient pride  
A sceptre's loss : a boy, I wept to hear  
My father's crown was on a stranger's brow. 95  
But when my arm gan grasp a sword, those tears,  
Those soft unseemly waters, turn'd to hues  
Of burning indignation ; every crown  
Shew'd, every kingly title to my ear  
Sounded a scorn and shame. Even at his height 100  
And plenitude of power I yearned to rise  
Against th' enthron'd Usurper—now, oh Kings !

Thus charter'd, thus commission'd, thus array'd,  
With what a noble phrenzy will we rush,  
Trampling the wreck of Saxon and of King ; 105  
Our path shall be as rapid and as bright :  
As summer meteor, more pernicious, that  
Waning into the dull unkindling air,  
We burning, desolating as we pass.

On, Britons, on, a tyrant fills your throne, 110  
Nor fitter monument may tyrant find  
Than his throne's ruins ; let the flat earth close  
O'er both at once ; the stranger Saxon lords  
Within our isle, the seas that bore him here  
In his storm-braving navy, bear him back 115  
Weltering and tossing in their drowning surge."

Low'ring he stood, still in fierce act of speech,  
Yet speechless. Sudden, then, in dread uproar  
Rose shout of war, with thundering clash of arms  
Mingled, then hurrying spears and nodding helms 120  
With glittering tumult in the pale gloom flash'd ;  
War, war each voice, each stricken shield denounc'd.

Amid the multitudinous din arose  
Solemnly the Bright City's Lord, down sunk

Instant all tumult, broke abruptly off, 125  
Fierce voice and clash of arms : so mute and deep  
Settled the silence, the low sound was heard  
Of distant waterfall, the acorn drops  
From the green arch above. Still and abash'd  
Sate the fierce conclave, while with mild reproof 130  
Winning all hearts, the gracious Chieftain spake.  
“ Brave sight for earth and heaven ! it doth not fail  
A nation's cry for freedom and for faith,  
Nor faint, nor deaden in the mist and gloom  
Of this low earth, it takes the morning's wings, 135  
Passeth the crystal skies, and beats heaven's gate ;  
There glideth through the gladdening Angel choirs,  
That fan it onward with their favouring plumes,  
To the eternal sapphire throne, and him  
That sits thereon, Ineffable. Oh Kings, 140  
Our council thus appealing may not wear  
Seeming of earthly passion, lust of sway,  
Or phrenetic vengeance : we must rise in wrath,  
But wear it as a mourner's robe of grief,  
Not as a garb of joy : must boldly strike, 145  
But like the Roman, with reverted face,

In sorrow to be so enforc'd. Brave Chiefs,  
It would misseem a son of this proud isle,  
To trample on the fallen, though a King;  
It would misseem a Christian to rejoice 150  
Where virtue hath play'd false, and fame's pure light  
Hath sicken'd to dishonourable gloom.  
Vortigern is our foe, no more our King,  
Yet King he hath been, King he had been still,  
Had never his high vaulting pride disdain'd 155  
The smooth dominion of old use, nor striven  
To fix on our impatient necks the yoke  
Of foreign usurpation; our free land  
Will not endure the heathen Saxons rule,  
Nor him that rules by heathen Saxon power. 160  
So march we forth in th' armour of our right,  
From our once King not falling off in hate  
Or fickleness, but by severe constraint  
Of duty to ourselves and to our God.  
So march we forth, and in such state may make 165  
Our mother land to vaunt of us: raise up,  
Side by side, the fair airs to captivate  
To an approval of our upright deed,



Our royal banner and the Cross of Christ ;  
And move within their cirque of splendour, calm,  
And yet resistless as the bright-man'd steeds  
That bear the Morn to disenthroned old Night.

And now our kingly sceptre, forced aside,  
By stress and pressure of disorder'd times,  
Devious into an alien hand, reverts  
To the old line ; the heir of Constantine,  
Constans, the elder than this noble pair,  
Stands foremost on succession's golden roll.

Nor know not I his gentle soul more apt,  
To listen the soft flowing vesper hymn,  
Than danger's spirit-stirring trump, yet deem,  
Thus once forewarn'd 'tis dangerous to divert  
The stream of royal blood, that broken, pours  
Waters of bitterness and civil strife.

O'er th' harass'd land, and therefore thus hail I  
Constans the King of Britain. Speak I right?  
I pause, and wait, oh Chiefs, your high award."

He ceased, nor time for voice or swift acclaim,  
Scowling a sullen laugh of scorn, leaped forth  
The mountain King, the Sovereign of the lakes

And dales this side the Caledonian bound ;  
 He only, when the Kings sate awe-struck, stood  
 Elate with mocking pity in his frown ;  
 A mighty savage, he of God and man.  
 Alike contemptuous : nought of Christian lore  
 Knew he, yet scoff'd unknown, 'twas peaceful, meek,  
 Thence worthless knowledge. Him delighted more  
 Helvellyn's cloud-wrapt brow to climb, and share  
 The eagle's stormy solitude ; 'mid wreck  
 Of whirlwinds and dire lightnings huge he stood,  
 Where his own Gods he deem'd on volleying clouds  
 Abroad were riding and black hurricane.  
 Them in their misty pride assail'd he oft  
 With impious threat, and laugh'd when th' echoing glens  
 His wild defiance cast unanswered back.  
 Now with curl'd lip of scorn, and brow uplift,  
 Lordly command, not counsel fierce he spake.  
 —“ Shame, coward shame ! as though the fowls of heaven,  
 When in dusk majesty and pride of wing  
 Sails forth the monarch eagle, down should stoop  
 In homage to the daw. Oh craven souls,  
 When Snowdon or high Skiddaw's brow is bare,

To plant the stately standard of revolt  
Upon a molehill. Constans ! that to him  
Caswallon should bow down ; aloft our crown  
Upon the giddy banner staff, that rocks  
On Troynovant's tall citadel, uphang,  
And who the dizzy glory will rend down,  
Or Constans or Caswallon ? The bright throne  
Environ with grim ranks of steel-girt men :  
Huge Saxons black with grisly scars of war,  
Who first will hew to that triumphal seat  
His ruinous path ? Hear, sceptred Britons, hear,  
A counsel worthy the deep thoughts of kings :  
Of valorous achievement and bold deeds  
Be guerdon to the mightiest of our Isle,  
The Sov'reignty of Britain ; spurn my voice,  
And I renounce your counsels, cast you off,  
And with my hardy vassals of the north  
I join the Saxon."—Then fierce sounds again  
Broke out, wan flames of brandish'd armour flash'd.  
In rude disorder and infuriate haste  
Sprang every warrior from his seat, as clouds  
Amid the sultry heaven, thunderous and vast,

Gather their blackening disarray to burst 235  
Upon some mountain turret, so the Chiefs  
Banded their fierce confusion to rush on,  
And whelm in his insulting pride the foe.  
He stood as one in joy, and lower'd a smile,  
With wolf-skin robe flung back, broad shield outstretch'd,  
And battle axe uplift: vaunting and huge 241  
As fabled giant on embattled Heaven  
Glaring not less than utter overthrow,  
And total wreck; forthwith a youth rush'd out,  
His moony buckler high upheld to bar 245  
The onset, and with voice, which youthful awe  
Temper'd to tone less resolute, address'd  
The haughty Chieftain. "Father, deem not thou,  
Malwyn confederate in thy lawless thought,  
Mine is a Briton's soul, a Briton's sword, 250  
But mortal man that seeks thy life, must pass  
O'er Malwyn's corpse." Back Chief and King recoil'd,  
In breathless admiration. Nobler pride,  
And human joy almost to softness smooth'd  
Caswallon's rugged brow. "Well hast thou said, 255  
Son of Caswallon, worthy of thy sire!



On thine own track mount thou to fame, nor swerve  
For man, or more than man."—Awhile the Kings  
Brief parley held, then stately and severe  
Rose Emrys, and pronounc'd their stern arrest. 260

“Caswallon of the Mountains, long our isle  
Hath mark'd thy wavering mood, now friend now foe;  
Now in the Caledonian inroad prompt  
To bear thy share in rapine, foremost now  
In our high councils. This we further say, 265  
We scorn thy war, Caswallon, hate thy peace,  
And deem it of our mercy that, unscath'd,  
We ban thee from our presence.” Nor reply  
Caswallon deign'd; calm strode he as in scorn  
Of wrath 'gainst foes so lowly. Far was heard 270  
His tread along the rocky path, the crash  
Of branches rent by his unstooping helm.  
They in blank wonder sate, nor wholly quell'd  
Wrath and insulted majesty, with look  
As he were still in presence fix'd, and stern. 275  
Then spake Prince Emrys, “Not of trivial toil  
To shape the rude trunk of our enterprize  
To smooth perfection; deeply must we found,

And strongly build the fabric of our hopes,  
And each must hold his charge. Be, Samor, thine 280  
To bear our brother Constans Britain's crown,  
In name of our assembled Kings. Be mine  
From the Armoric shore, King Hoel's realm,  
(Our father's brother, Hoel) to embark  
The succours of his high-fam'd Chivalry. 285  
Thou, Uther, to the West; each other King  
Unto his own, at signal of revolt  
To lead his armed Vassalage abroad."

So saying, each departed; fell again  
The ancient silence on the solemn place. 290

Together from the forest pass'd the friends,  
Samor and Elidure; below their way  
Went wandering on through flowery meads, or sank  
Beneath green arches dim of beechen shade.  
Around the golden hills in summer wealth 295  
Bask'd in the sunshine; on a river bank  
Long gleaming down its woodland course, repos'd  
Many a white hamlet: even fierce shrines of war  
Wore aspect mild of peace; towers dark of yore  
And rugged in the Roman war array, 300

With wanton ivy and gray moss o'ergrown,  
Their green crowns melted in the azure heavens.

“ Oh grief! o'er yon fair meads and smiling lawns  
Must steeds of carnage batten, men of blood  
Their fell magnificence of murtherous pomp 305  
Pavilion in yon placid groves of peace.  
The blood-thirst savages of wood and air,  
In meet abodes of wilderness and woe,  
Shroud their abhorred revels; the gaunt wolf  
Prowls gloomy o'er the wintry blasted heath; 310  
Brood desolate on some bare mountain peak  
Raven and screaming vulture. Man, fell man,  
Envious of bliss he scorns, 'mid haunts of peace,  
Spots fair and blissful, the rare stars of earth,  
Plays ever his foul game of spoil and death, 315  
Ruthless, then vaunts himself Creation's pride,  
Supreme o'er all alone in deeds of blood.”

Thus Elidure; him Samor, from deep trance  
Wakening, addrest: “ Soft man of peace my prayer  
Would ask of heaven no theatre of strife 320  
Save yon fair plain, there forth the weak would start  
In the tumultuous valour of despair,

The timorous proudly tower in scorn of death :  
There, where each tree, each dell, each grassy knoll,  
Lovely from memory of some past delight, 325  
Is kindred to the soul ; his house of prayer,  
The altar of his bridal vow, the font  
Of his sweet infants baptism, kindred all,  
Holist and last, his fathers peaceful graves :  
Oh, were all Britain, like yon beauteous plain, 330  
Blissful and free, that angels there might walk  
Forgetful of their heavenly bowers of light,  
Friend of my boyhood, these all-conquering foes,  
Who fetter the free winds, and ride the sea  
Kinglike, their menacing prows would turn aloof, 335  
And bitterly, in baffled lust of prey,  
Curse the proud happiness that mock'd their might."

Lo, ere he paus'd, gay files of dazzling light  
Slow o'er the plain advancing, indistinct  
From their full brightness ; gradual the long blaze 340  
Broke into form, and lance and bow and helm,  
Standard and streamer, chariot and fair steed,  
Start from the mingled splendour. On their height  
Unseen, the Chieftains watch'd the winding pomp.



And all before the azure-vested Bards 345  
From glancing instruments shook bridal glee.  
Then came the gorgeous chariots, rough with gold,  
And steeds their proud heads nodding with rich weight  
Of frontlet wreathed with flowers and shadowy plumes ;  
Therein sate ladies robed in costly state, 350  
Each like a Queen ; the noble charioteers,  
Briton in garb, with purple mantle loose,  
O'er steel, in network bright, or scale o'er scale,  
Glittering, and aventayle barr'd close and firm,  
As yet the gaudy traitors shamed to meet 355  
The cold keen glance of countryman betray'd.  
Dark in their iron arms, some wildly girt  
With Caledonian spoils, their yellow hair  
Down from the casque in broad luxuriant flow  
Spreading, and lofty banner wide display'd, 360  
Whereon a milk-white courser reinless shone,  
Paced forth the Saxon warriors. High o'er all,  
Tempestuous Horsa, chafing his hot steed,  
And Hengist with his wreath of amber beads,\*

\* He is so decorated by the Welsh Poets. See Transl. of the Brut of Tysilio, by Peter Roberts.

His hoary strength, in spite of age or toil, 365  
A tower of might : with that tall grove of spears,  
Circled, and rampire close of serried shields,  
The bridegroom Monarch rode, his bright attire  
Peaceful, as fitting nuptial pomp, his robe  
Rich-floating strew'd the earth with purple shade, 370  
And on his lofty brow a regal crown,  
Bright as a wreath of sunbeams ; high his arm  
The ivory sceptre bore of kingly sway :  
Yet who his mien and bearing watch'd had seen  
Dim gleam of jealous steel, or lurking mail 375  
Beneath those glorious trappings, for his gaze,  
Now jocund, chang'd anon to wandering stare,  
Fearful and wild, as the still air were rife  
With vengeful javelins showering death, his pace  
Hurried, yet tardy, as of one who rides 380  
O'er land still tottering with an earthquake shock.

And him beside, on snowy palfrey, deck'd  
With silver bells its pendant mane profuse,  
Of silver and of stainless ermin  
The bright caparisons, and all her robes 385  
White as of woven lily cups, the Bride

Majestic rode as on a waving throne.  
Her sunbright hair she wav'd, and smil'd around,  
As though, of less than kingly Paramour  
Scornful, she said, Lo, Britain, through your land 390  
I lead the enthralled sovereign of your isle.  
Yet so surpassing fair, brief instant wish'd  
Those wrathful Briton Chiefs their leafy screen  
A thin transparent cloud: of his high charge  
Brief while forgetful, Samor stood entranced, 395  
Fearing her form should fleet too swift away.

Came it from earth or air, yon savage shape,  
His garb, if garb it be, of shaggy hair  
Close folding o'er his dusky limbs, his locks  
And waving matted beard like cypress boughs 400  
On bleak heath swaying to the midnight storm?  
Came he from yon deep wood? On the light spray  
No leaf is stirring. On the winged winds  
Rode he? No breeze awakes the noontide air.  
Mid that arm'd throng, dismaying, undismay'd, 405  
With a strange eye dilated, as unus'd  
To common sights of earth, and voice that seem'd  
Rarely to hold discourse with human ears,

“ Joy,” and again, and thrice he uttered “ Joy.”  
Cower’d Horsa on his palsied steed ; aghast, 410  
As toiling to despise the thing he fear’d,  
Sate Hengist. “ Joy to Bridegroom and to Bride !  
Why should not man rejoice, and earth be glad ?  
Beyond the sphere of man, the round of earth,  
There’s loud rejoicing, ’tis not in the heavens ! 415  
And many ministrant Angels shake their wings  
In gladness, wings that are not plum’d with light.  
The dead are jocund, not the dead in bliss.  
Your couch is blest—by all whose blessings blast,  
All things unlovely gratulate your love. 420  
I see the nuptial pomp, the nuptial song  
I hear, and full the pomp, for Hate, and Fear,  
And excellent Dishonour, and bright Shame,  
And rose-cheek’d Grief, and jovial Discontent,  
And that majestic herald, Infamy, 425  
And that high noble, Servitude, are there,  
A blithesome troop, a gay and festive crew.  
And the Land’s curses are the bridal hymn ;  
Sweetly and shrilly doth th’ accordant Isle  
Imprecate the glad Hymenean song. 430



So joy again, I say, to Britain's King,  
That taketh to his bosom Britain's fate,  
Her beautiful destruction to his bed.

And joy to Britain's Queen, who bears her Lord

So bright a dowry and profuse, long years 435

Of war and havoc, and fair streams of blood,

And plenteous ruin, loss of crown and fame,

And full perdition of the immortal soul ;

So thrice again I utter ' joy,' ' joy,' ' joy !' "

Then upsprung spear to strike, and bicker'd bow ; 440

Ere spear could strike, or shaft could fly, the path

Was bare and vacant ; shape nor sound remain'd ;

Only the voice of Vortigern moan'd out,

" Merlin ;"—and on the long procession past.

Down in a quiet dale, where beechen groves 445

With interchanging gold and glossy green

O'ermantled the smooth slopes, that fell around

Like a fair amphitheatre, beneath

A brook went wand'ring through fresh meadow banks,

With a cool summer dashing, here the Chiefs 450

The royal Hermit met, his gentle brow

Smooth as a slumbering Angel's plumes (effaced

All traces of this rude and wearing earth,  
All brands of fiery passions, wild desires)  
Wore that calm holiness the sainted dead 455  
Smile on the visions of their lov'd on earth :  
His life was like a sleep, with heavenly sights,  
And harmonies, as of angelic sounds  
Visited ever, nor his barren heart  
Touch'd not the light affections, trembled not 460  
His spirit with love's fervent swell, but all  
Most wont to bear man's soul to earth, round him  
As the thin morning clouds around the lark,  
Gather'd, to float him upward to the heavens.

They at his feet down laid the kingly crown, 465  
Fulfill'd their lofty mission. He, the while,  
With that mild sadness he had watch'd the leaves  
Drip from the sere autumnal bough, survey'd  
Its stately glittering. " Men of earth, why mock,  
With gaudy pageantry, and titled pomp, 470  
The frail and transient pilgrims of this world.  
The fading flag-flower on yon streamlet brink,  
Were garland meeter for our mortal brows  
Than yon rich blaze of gems." " Prince," Samor spake

“ Sweet is it down the silent vale of life 475  
To glide away, of all but Heaven forgot,  
Forgetting all but Heaven. Of king-born men,  
Lords of mankind, high delegates of Heaven,  
Loftier the doom, their rare prerogative  
The luxury of conferring bliss. Oh, Prince, 480  
Not by the stream to slumber, not to waste  
Idly in joyous dreams the drowsy hours,  
Hath Heaven thy kingly heritage ordain’d ;  
Set badge of Empery on thy brow : of God  
The noblest service is to serve mankind, 485  
To save a nation all a mortal’s power,  
To imitate the Saviour of the world.”

Calm answer’d Constans, “ Earth’s exalted fame,  
Grandeurs and glories gleam upon my soul.  
Like wintery sun-light on a plain of snow. 490  
With prayers, a Hermit’s arms, I aid your cause,  
Farewell. Why pause ye, as to question more  
The wisdom of my choice—lo, yon fair orb ;  
How spotless the fine azure where he holds  
His secret palace, knows not his pure light 495  
A stain of dimness, till th’ abode of men

Pours o'er it its infectious mists." "Oh, Prince,  
'Tis not the glory of that peerless light,  
The barren glittering, the unfruitful waste  
Of splendour on the still inanimate skies, 500  
It is the life, the motion, and the joy  
It breathes along this world of man, the broad  
Munificence of blessing that awakes,  
And in its rapturous gratitude springs up,  
To glorify its bounteous source of pride." 505

"I see thy brow at thine own words on fire ;  
Mine, Samor, yet is calm and cold." "Dost thou,  
Constans, all title, claim, and right renounce  
To Britain's throne?" "Even free as I renounce  
The everlasting enemy of man." 510

"Will thy voice mingle with the general cry,  
'Long live King Emrys?'"—"Long may Emrys live,  
Even the eternal life beyond the grave."

"Yet one word more ; 'tis perilous in the storm  
For the tall pine, nor less, in evil days, 515  
For the high born and exalted of the state.  
The Saxon blood-hounds are abroad for prey,  
Seek thou some quiet solitude remote



Beyond their prowling range."—His arm to Heaven  
Slowly uplifted, "Will they reach me there?" 520  
Spake the meek Hermit, "there is rest secure."

They parted; gentle Elidure alone,  
Lingering with somewhat of an envious gaze,  
View'd the deep quiet of that placid dell.

That night were seen along the dusky wood, 525  
Of more than human stature moving forms,  
Pale faces circled with black iron helms,  
Not of the Briton shape their garb or arms;  
Stealthy their pace and slow; the peasants thought  
Demons of evil that sad night had power, 530  
And pray'd Heaven's grace to guard the saintly man.

At morn roved forth the peasant, down the dale  
His dog went bounding to the Hermit's cell,  
For all mute creatures loved the man of God.  
A quick and desolate moaning nearer call'd 535  
The peasant; in officious grief the dog  
Stood licking the cold hand that drooping hung  
Lifeless; the mild composure of his brow  
On the cross rested; praying he had died,  
And his cold features yet were smiling prayer. 540

## BOOK III.

ORIENT the bright-hair'd Charioteer of heaven  
Pour'd daylight from his opal wheels, and struck  
From the blue pavement of the sky clear flakes  
Of azure light upon the Eastern sea.  
And as the gray mists slowly curl'd away,  
Rose the white cliffs of Kent, like palace fair,  
Or fane of snowy marble, to enshrine  
Blue Amphitrite, or the Sea-Gods old  
Of Pagan mariner. Rode tall below  
The Saxon navy, as from midnight sleep  
Wakening ; the gray sails in the breeze of morn  
'Gan tremble, gleaming oars flash in the spray.  
The Sea-Kings on the beach in parley stern  
Were met, nor less than nation's doom and fate

Of kingdoms in their voice. Lo, in the midst 15  
Stood huge Caswallon, word of mild salute  
Deign'd not, but thus address the Ocean Lord.

“ Saxon ! that o'er this fair and princely isle  
Thou would'st win empire by the sword of war,  
I marvel not, arraign not—'tis a dream, 20  
Noble as o'er the heavens to walk abroad,  
Companion of yon bright majestic sun.  
Now by my glory, Saxon, mortal peer  
Never Caswallon brook'd, save thee alone,  
Thee, rival in his race of pride and power. 25  
Arm'd with myself and all th' embattled North,  
Not Roman Britons, sons of sires who dash'd  
The purple Conquerors' haughty wall to earth,  
And trampled their strewn ramparts ; who ne'er deign'd  
Barter for gaudy robe and marble pile, 30  
Fierce naked freedom, and wild mountain cave,  
Will I, and thou with Saxon spears begirt,  
Bow this fair Britain to our lordly sway.  
Then will we two, from pale perplexed earth  
Seen, like twin meteors battling in high heaven, 35  
On some lone eminence wage glorious strife,  
Sole empire meed of conquest, of defeat

Utter annihilation, dark and full,  
Solace and lofty comfort." Bold he paus'd,  
Nor Hengist with pale sign of awe or dread 40  
Shamed the proud peerage, but with hardy speech  
Guileful, won faith by seeming scorn of guile.

" Briton, to dare high deeds, and to disown,  
Argues a wavering valour ; the firm soul  
Vaunts resolute its lofty dangerous scope. 45  
To us our Gods o'er ocean and its shores  
Kingly dominion and wide sway have given ;  
Were insult to our might and base reproach,  
The freedom of one sea-girt isle, to thee  
Honouring, not fearing, 'mid our prime we grant 50  
Transcendant state, and eminence of power.  
Now speed we of th' immortal Powers in Heaven,  
Our high omniscient Fathers, to demand  
If on the eternal shield of fate be graven  
Ruin or Conquest, ere to bold emprize 55  
We gird our brazen arms."—" Of mighty men  
The gods are mighty, whom the Saxon fears,  
The paramount of men, 'twere rash to scorn,  
No calm and sunshine deities of peace."—

So spake Caswallon, the mild faith of Christ 60



Scoffing with covert mockery ; thus th' All Wise  
The imaginations of the proud on earth  
Silent endures, till some brief point of time  
Crumbles the high-built insolence of years.

“ Wilt thou behold our gods ? ” fierce Horsa cried. 65  
“ Then mount the bark, abroad her wings are spread,  
And fleet along the obedient deep she speeds.  
Fear not, proud Briton.” — “ Fear ! ” Caswallon cried ;  
All iron as he stood, o'er surf, surge, wave  
He bounded, hollow rang his heavy arms, 70  
The bark her tall side to the troubled waves  
Stoop'd groaning, nor delay'd the Ocean King.

“ Brother, farewell ! not singly the bold wolf  
Scatters the mountain herd ; in grim repose  
He rests expectant of his kindred troop, 75  
Numberless from their shaggy dens they sweep,  
And spacious o'er the antler'd monarch's realm  
Spreads the wide ravage of their muster'd might.”

Stern Horsa bow'd assent, yet paus'd to watch  
The proud bark tilting o'er the azure plain. 80  
Stately she rode her path of light, her sails  
In dalliance with the courteous winds : bold Man !

Well may thy full heart bound: in earth and air  
The thunder-maned steed, the eagle thron'd  
In the pavilion of his plumes, stand forth 85  
Creation's glories; but the noblest shape  
That walks the deep thy workmanship sublime  
Owneth, and starts from thee to life. Vaunt thou,  
Yet humbly vaunt, all greatness is from God.

What dolphin glancing in his silver sport, 90  
More graceful with translucent pinion parts  
The liquid azure? what Leviathan,  
Huge heaving on the thick Norwegian foam,  
More lordly than the white-wing'd bark, that wafts  
The Sea King o'er his empire? the fair waves 95  
Rise in their gamesome turbulence, and pay  
Wild homage to that royal Mariner.

The motion and the murmur of the deep,  
The rushing of the silent, solemn sky,  
Each in its deep abyss and pure expanse, 100  
Seeming its secret mysteries of might,  
Its ruling soul of everlasting change,  
To veil from mortal knowledge, ever pour,  
O'er savage ev'n and rude, tumultuous awe,

And exultation of a pleasing dread. 103  
From dizzy notions of infinity,  
Vague sense of ever-during sights and sounds;  
Inactive though the body, the free spirit,  
Vagrant along the illimitable void,  
Perils uncouth and rich uncertainties 110  
Ranges in restless round, plucks treasures rare,  
That gem the caverns of the hoary deep,  
Or bathes with sea-maids in their crystal bowers,  
Or with gay creatures and fantastical  
Peoples some dreamy land; such joys of old 115  
Lured the fierce Saxon from his darksome woods,  
To launch along the vast and barren sea.  
Such joys through this long voyage, wean'd brief while  
From thoughts of war and war-won empire wide,  
Haughty Caswallon, or from him assum'd 120  
Fierce aspect, and a battailous character.

'Twas midnight, but a rich unnatural dawn  
Sheets the fir'd Arctic heaven; forth springs an arch,  
O'erspanning with a crystal pathway pure  
The starry sky, as though for Gods to march, 125  
With show of heavenly warfare daunting earth,

To that wild revel of the northern clouds ;  
That now with broad and bannery light distinct,  
Stream in their restless wavings to and fro,  
While the sea billows gleam them mellow back ; 130  
Anon like slender lances bright upstart,  
And clash and cross with hurtle and with flash,  
Tilting their airy tournament.”—“ Brave signs,”  
Cried Hengist ; “ lo, our Gods their standards rear,  
And with glad omen of immortal strife 135  
Salute our high-wing’d purpose.”—“ Yea (return’d  
Caswallon) from mine own Helvellyn’s brow,  
Never a brighter conflict in the skies  
Taught me that war was dear in Heaven : dream ye  
Of tamer faith in gentle Southern skies 140  
Your smooth and basking deities, our North  
Wooes not with tender hues and sunny smiles  
Soft worship, but emblazons all the air  
With semblance of celestial strife, unveils  
To us of their empyreal halls the pomp, 145  
The secret majesty of godlike war.”

Oh Lord of Lords ! incessant thus assail’d  
That Pagan with his frantic railings Thee,



Th' Ineffable, yet worshipp'd of thy power  
A faint and pale effect, reflection dim 150  
From thy soul-blinding glories. On they sail'd,  
Till o'er the dark deep now the wintry winds  
Swept on their murky pinions, huge and high  
The liquid legions of the main arose;  
Like snow upon the sable pines, the foam 155  
Hung hoary on their towered fronts; but slow,  
Like a triumphant warrior, their bold bark  
Wore onward, now upon the loftiest height  
Shaking its streamers gay defiance, now  
With brave devotion to the prone-abyss 160  
Down rushing, but the sternest Saxon cheek  
Put not to shame that dauntless Landsman; he  
In the strong passion of a new delight  
On the fierce tumult feasts, and almost grieves,  
When now beneath the haven rocks embayed, 165  
The angry waves seem wearying to repose,  
And the slack sails slow droop their flagging folds.  
Their port was southward of that Strait, where bursts  
The Baltic, with her massy waves of ice  
Encumbering far and wide the Northern main. 170

South, North, and East, the rapid heralds speed,  
Summoning from fen or forest, moor or wild,  
Britain ! on thee to banquet, all who bathe  
In Weser, Elbe, or Rhine, their saffron locks,  
Hertog and Erle and King ; the huntsman bold 175  
Of bear, or bison, o'er the quaking moss,  
Or grim Vikinger, who but sues his Gods  
For tempests, so upon some wealthy coast  
Bursts unforeseen his midnight frigate fierce,  
And freights its greedy hold with amplest spoil. 180

And now have Hengist and Caswallon climb'd  
The chariot of the Oracle ; no wheels  
Bear that strange car ; like wind along the sea,  
It glides along the rapid rein-deer's track.  
Beauteous those gentle rein-deer arch'd their necks, 185  
And cast their palmy antlers back, and spread  
Their broad red nostrils to the wind ; they hear  
Old Hengist's voice, like arrows down the gale,  
Like shot-stars through the welkin start they forth.  
The car slides light, the deer bound fleet : they pass 190  
Dark leagues of pine and fir, the filmy light,  
Shivering with every motion of the wind

On their brown path lies tremulous, o'er them sails,  
Heard through the dismal foliage hissing shrill,  
And hoarser groaning of the swaying boughs, 195  
The funeral descant of the ominous birds.  
Around them the prophetic milk white steeds,\*  
Their necks yet virgin of the taming curb,  
With all their loose long glories, arch, and pass  
In solemn silence, and regardless paw 200  
The unechoing earth. But that old German, set  
Inflexible with bolder hand to draw  
The veil of dusk futurity, disdains  
These tamer omens. Still the car slides light,  
'The deer bound fleet, they pause not, save to quaff 205  
The narrow cruise, to share their scanty store.  
Like swallows o'er the glassy rivers smooth,  
O'er the pellucid lake, with glittering breast  
Yet wrinkled with its rippling waves, they skim,  
The dead unstirring ocean bears them on, 210  
Amid the immortal ice-hills wind they now.

\* *Proprium gentis, equorum quoque præsagia ac monitus experiri: publicè aluntur iisdem nemoribus ac lucis. Candidi, et nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitusque ac fremitus observant. Tac. Germ.*

In restless change, God's softer summer works  
Glitter and fade, are born and die, but these,  
Endiadem'd by undissolving snows,  
High Potentates of winter's drear domain, 215  
Accumulate their everlasting bulk,  
Eternal and imperishable, stand  
Amid Creation's swift inconstant round,  
In majesty of silence undisturb'd,  
Save when from their long-menacing brows they shake  
The ruining Avalanche; unvisited 221  
By motion, but of sailing clouds, when sleets  
From their unwasting granary barb their darts,  
And the grim North-wind loads his rimy wings.  
Nor trace of man, save many a fathom deep, 225  
Haply dark signs of some tall people strange,  
That walk'd the infant earth, may shroud profound  
Their legends inaccessible. They soar  
In headlong precipice, or pyramid  
Linking the earth and heaven, to which the piles 230  
Where those Egyptian despots rot sublime,  
Or even that frantic Babylonian tower,  
Were frivolous domes for laughter and for scorn.



Nor wants soft interchange of vale, where smiles  
White mimicry of foliage and thin flower. 235  
Feathery and fanlike spreads the leafy ice,  
With dropping cup, and roving tendril loose,  
As though the glassy dew's o'er flower and herb  
Their silken moisture had congeal'd, and yet  
Within that slender veil their knots profuse 240  
Blossom'd and blush'd with tender life, the couch  
Less various where the fabled Zephyr fans  
With his mild wings his Flora's bloomy locks;  
But colourless and cold, these flowering vales  
Seem meeter for decrepit Winter's head 245  
To lie in numb repose. The car slides light,  
The deer bound fleet, the long gray wilderness  
Hath something of a roseate glimmering dim,  
And widens still its pale expanse: when lo,  
A light of azure, wavering to display 250  
No sights, no shapes of darkness and of fear.  
Tremblingly flash'd the inconstant meteor light,  
Shewing thin forms, like virgins of this earth,  
Save that all signs of human joy or grief,  
The flush of passion, smile or tear had seem'd 255

On the fix'd brightness of each dazzling cheek,  
Strange and unnatural: statues not unlike  
By nature, in fantastic mood congeal'd  
From purest snow, the fair of earth to shame,  
Surpassing beauteous: breath of mortal life 260  
Heaved not their bosoms, and no rosy blood  
Tinged their full veins, yet mov'd they, and their steps  
Were harmony. But three of that bright troop,  
The loveliest and the wildest, stood aloof,  
Enwrap't by what in human form were like 265  
Impulse divine, of their fine nature seem'd  
The eternal instinct. Them no less survey'd  
Caswallon with the knitted brow of scorn,  
Bitter he spake—"No marvel Saxon souls  
Revel in war's delights, so stern, so fierce 270  
Their deities." Severe with wrath suppress,  
As one ill-brooking that irreverent mirth  
Scoff'd the feign'd lore, himself ne'er dar'd to doubt,  
Answer'd the son of Woden. "These, proud Chief,  
So snowy, soft, and airy gentle, these 275  
Are ministers of destiny and death,  
The viewless Riders of the battle field:

When sounds the rushing of their sable steeds,  
Down sink the summon'd mighty, and expand,  
Valhalla's cloudy portals; to their thrones 280  
They the triumphant strangers lead, and pour  
Lavish the eternal beverage of the Gods.  
Mark thou yon bright-hair'd three? and would thy soul  
Grasp the famed deeds of ancient time, or know  
The master spirits of our present world. 285  
Lo Gudur, she whose deep mysterious soul  
Treasureth the past, and Rosta, who beholds  
All acts and agents of this living earth;  
She too is there before whose spacious sight  
The years that have not been start up and live, 290  
Who reads within the soul of man unborn  
The unimagin'd purpose, of the sage  
Skulda the sagest. Ask and thou shalt know."  
—"I am not King of Britain, have not been,  
Hateful the present and the past, my soul 295  
Thirsteth for what shall be."—Then Hengist spake  
In tone of mix'd authority and prayer,  
"Queen of the Future, Valkyr, hear and speak,  
Speak to the Son of Woden."—All the troop

Instant the thin bright air absorb'd, alone 300  
Stood Skulda with her white hair waving wide,  
As trembling on the verge of palpable being,  
Ready to languish too in light away.

“ O'er Britain's isle doth Woden to his sons  
Give empire ?” She, but in no human tone, 305  
E'er from the soul's emotion harsh or soft,  
One glittering rich unvarying tone replied,  
“ To thine, but not to thee.”—And, “ I am thine,”  
Caswallon shouted loud, and sternly shook  
His visionary sceptre. “ Whence the foe 310  
Fatal to Hengist, and to Hengist's sway ?”

“ Not from the mountain, Saxon, from the Vale.”  
Heard, heeded not the Mountain Chief that strain  
Dire and ill-boding, or if heard, disdain'd 314  
Adverse what prosperous seem'd a voice from Heaven.

“ By what rich rite,” he cried, “ may Briton Chief  
Win favour from high Woden ?”—“ Not the blood  
Of steed or stag ; a flower of earth must fade.  
Blest o'er all virgins of the earth, the chaste,  
The beautiful, by Heaven ordain'd to lead 320  
The souls of valiant men to the pale hall



Of the Immortal; air her path, and Heaven  
Her dwelling, with the fair and brave of earth  
Her sole communion?"—"By my future throne,  
Proud office for the daughter of a King! 325

A royal damsel, mine own blood, shall join  
Your cloudy mysteries."—A hue like joy  
Overspread all her face and form, while slow  
Into the air she brighten'd, indistinct  
Even now, and now invisible. Sad seem'd 330

In gloomy converse with his own dark mind  
Old Hengist, nor despair'd that bold of soul,  
In pride of human wisdom to revoke  
The irrevocable, what himself deem'd fate  
By force or fraud to master or elude. 335

O glorious eminence of virtuous fame,  
Glorious from peril! Warrior of the Vales,  
Fate-signal'd Samor, vaunt not thou the love  
Of a blind people, or weak prince: thy boast  
The sworn unerring hate of Britain's foe. 340

So pass'd they forth, one in wild joy elate,  
Already in his high disdainful thought  
Wielding supremacy; each of fix'd fate  
Nought heeding, but what fed his fierce desires.

The car slides light, the deer bound fleet, nor sun 345  
Nor star in all the hazy heavens. Snow, snow,  
Above, around, beneath. Unblinded yet,  
Drive on the kingly charioteers, and shake  
The showery plumage from their locks; fast fades  
The long pale plain, the giant ice-hills sink, 350  
Lakes, rivers, seas are patient of their speed,  
Huge, dim, and dusk the forest pines rush back,  
Now pant the brown deer by that ocean bay.

How desolate are now thy unplough'd waves,  
Dark Baltic! wandering Elbe, thy icy breast 355  
How silent of thy hunters. Sleep thou calm  
Amid thy wanton vineyards, Gaul! no more  
The blue-eyed Plunderers, bridging thy broad Rhine,  
Waste thy inebriate harvests clustering pride.  
Sing songs of joy, soft Italy! o'er thee 360  
But Alaric and Attila drive on  
Their chariot wheels of conquest, this their peer  
In majesty of havoc, in renown  
Of devastation, this, the fiercer third  
Of human Furies, scap'st thou, therefore sing, 365  
Soft Italy; for lo, at Hengist's call,  
Vast Germany dispeoples her wide realm,

Deserts to silence and the beasts of game  
Her long and soundless forests. Seems the North  
The forge of Nations, in one fleet t' exhaust 370  
Her iron wealth of warriors; helmed high  
The Suevian with his \* towery knotted locks,  
Frisian and Scandinavian, Cimbrian rich  
In ancient vauntage of his sires, who clomb  
The Alpine snows, and shook free Rome with dread. 375  
And other nameless, numberless, sweep forth  
Their bands; but three almost in nations came :  
The Jute, the Anglian, and the Saxon, each  
Leaving earth bare for many a lonesome league,  
His wives, his children, and his Gods embarks, 380  
On the fierce quest of peril and of power.

Then forth arose each Chieftain to salute  
The polestar of their baleful galaxy,  
Prime Architect of ruin : him who sway'd  
Their hot marauding, desultory strife 385  
To cool and steady warfare, of their limbs

\* *Insigne gentis obliquare crinem, nodoque substringere*—*In altitudinem quandam et terrorem, adituri bella, compte, ut hostium oculis, ornantur.*  
Tac. Germ. 38.

The domineering soul. As each past on  
Shook up the Scald his harsh-strung shell, and cast  
The war tones of each nation to the winds ;  
And Hengist with imperious flattery met 390  
Each tall and titled Leader : “ Art thou here,  
Bold Frisian Hermengard ! a broader isle  
And fairer than thy azure Rhine laves round,  
Spreads for thee her green vallies. How brook'st thou,  
Strong Scandinavian Lodbrog, thou the Chief 395  
Of the renown'd Viking, while the waves  
So nobly riot with the wintry storms,  
The tame and steadfast land ? Now freely leap,  
Arngrim, along thy Suevian forests brown  
The bear and foam-tusk'd wild boar ; let them leap, 400  
A braver game is up on Britain's shore.  
O Cerdic, gray in glory, young in power,  
The Drave ran purple with thy boyish deeds,  
A darker, redder dye, o'er silver Thames  
Shall spread before thy ancient battle axe. 405  
Ho, Offa, the rich-flowing mead hath worn  
Your Jutland cups, beneath the British helms  
Capacious goblets smooth and fair await



Offa's carousals. Heir of Cimbric fame,\*  
Frotho, how these, of late the Roman's slaves, 410  
Will the race daunt, who set our Thor afront  
The Roman's Capitolian Jove. And thou,  
My gold-hair'd brother, are the British maids,  
Or British warriors, Abisa, the first  
In the fierce yearnings of thy boyish soul? 415  
And lo the mighty Anglian; oh, unfold  
Ocean more wide, more wealthy realms, too brief,  
Too narrow for Argantyr's fame, the round  
Of this the choice, the Sovereign of thine isles.

Thereat a sound of clattering shields arose, 420  
As all the rocks around with one harsh rift  
Had rent asunder: "Fair must be the land,  
And brave the conquest, plenteous the renown,  
Where Hengist leads strong Woden's sceptred sons!"

But inly laugh'd Caswallon, as he long'd 425  
With each or all to match his Briton strength;  
On the prophetic Valkyr thought, and glanced  
Proud pity on the legends of their praise.

Advanced Argantyr, his bold grasp apart,

\* *Cimbri parva nunc civitas sed gloria ingens.* Tac. Germ.

As peer his peer, led Hengist. "Thou and I, 430  
Saxon, must have our compact; dark I know  
Thy paths of strife, while my frank valour loves  
The broad bright sunshine; thou by sleight and art  
Min'st thy slow conquest; I with naked sword  
Affront my peril, till its menacing height 435  
Bow to the dust before me; for bold war,  
For noonday battling, tender I mine arm,  
But no allegiance own to subtle craft;  
To peace Argantyr doth revolt when thou  
Array'st stern war in the smooth garb of guile." 440  
"The weak, Argantyr, and the friendless, need  
Such politic skill; I take thee at thy word.  
Who skulks a fox when he dare prowl a wolf?  
Power charters force, where strong Argantyr stands  
Is power.—And now aboard, brave Chiefs, aboard, 445  
Or the soft spring o'ertakes our tardy keels,  
And with her slothful breezes smooths the skies."

Wonderous that ocean armament; in shoals  
Ride boat and bark, innumerable as the waves  
That show white slender streaks of foam between 450  
Their tawny sides, save here and there towers up

Some statelier admiral in lordly height  
 O'er the frail comm'nalty, whose limber ribs  
 Are the light wicker, cased with sturdy hides  
 Their level bottoms smooth.\* Oh, that frail Man, 455  
 Loose-woven frame of dissoluble stuff,  
 Uncharter'd from the boisterous license rude  
 Of pitiless winds and fierce unfetter'd waves,  
 To that unshackled libertine, wild Chance,  
 Amenable, unguaranteed from burst 460  
 And inroad of invading surge, that he,  
 With such thin barrier between life and death,  
 Should sit and skim along the ocean waste,  
 Careless as maiden in a flowery field;  
 Valour or phrenzy is it! They their toil 465  
 Ply nimbly, and with gallant oar chastise  
 The insurgent billows, their despotic sails  
 Lords o'er the wild democracy of air.

Less vast, and mann'd with tamer, feebler spirits,

\* *Primum cana salix, madefacto vimine parvam  
 Texitur in puppim, cæsoque induta juvenco,  
 Vectoris patiens tunidum super emicat amnem;  
 Sic Venetus stagnante Pado, fusoque Britannus  
 Navigat oceano.*

LUCAN.

In later days, against our Virgin Queen, 470  
The Spaniard's mad Armada; but the flag  
Of Howard, and the Almighty's stormy hand,  
Belied their braggard baptism, so they won  
Brave conquest! graves in ocean's barren caves,  
Or on the whirlpool-girded Orcades. 475

But onward rides that Pagan fleet: young Spring  
Hath scarcely tipt the leafless woods with green;  
Tyne's jetty tide is blanch'd with German oars.

Now whither with that dark-brow'd priest set forth  
Old Hengist and the Briton Mountain Lord? 480  
Is it, fell Hengist, that Caswallon's name  
Paragon thine in British hate, close link'd  
By fellowship in nameless rites accurst,  
Be hence more deeply, execrably thine?  
Or, from weak credence in such impious Gods, 485  
Urgest thou that fell sacrifice? Oh, where  
The spotless Virgin doom'd (so wild the creed)  
The Valkyr's airy troop to join, and glide  
Immortal through Valhalla's cloudy halls?



## BOOK IV.

SUNK was the sun, and up the eastern heaven,  
Like maiden on a lonely pilgrimage,  
Moved the meek Star of Eve ; the wandering air  
Breathed odours ; wood, and waveless lake, like man,  
Slept, weary of the garish babbling day. 5

Dove of the wilderness, thy snowy wing  
In slumber droops not ; Lilian, thou alone,  
'Mid the deep quiet, wakest. Dost thou rove,  
Idoltrous of yon majestic moon,  
That like a crystal-throned queen in Heaven, 10  
Seems with her present deity to hush  
To beauteous adoration all the earth ?  
Might seem the solemn silent mountain tops  
Stand up and worship, the translucent streams

Down th' hill sides glittering cherish the pure light 15

Beneath the shadowy foliage o'er them flung

At intervals; the lake, so silver white,

Glistens, all indistinct the snowy swans

Bask in the radiance cool: doth Lilian muse

To that apparent Queen her vesper hymn? 20

Nursling of solitude, her infant couch

Never did mother watch, within the grave

She slept unwaking; scornful turn'd aloof

Caswallon, of those pure instinctive joys

By father's felt, when playful infant grace, 25

Touch'd with a feminine softness, round the heart

Winds its light maze of undefin'd delight,

Contemptuous; he with haughty joy beheld

His boy, fair Malwyn, him in bossy shield

Rock'd proudly, him upbore to mountain steep, 30

Fierce and undaunted, for their dangerous nest

To battle with the eagle's clamorous brood.

But she the while from human tenderness

Estranged, and gentler feelings that light up

The cheek of youth with rosy joyous smile, 35

Like a forgotten lute, play'd on alone

By chance-caressing airs, amid the wild  
Beautcously pale, and sadly playful grew,  
A lonely child, by not one human heart  
Belov'd, and loving none ; nor strange, if learnt 40  
Her native fond affections to embrace  
Things senseless and inanimate : she lov'd  
All flow'rets that with rich embroidery fair  
Enamel the green earth, the odorous thyme,  
Wild rose, and roving eglantine, nor spar'd 45  
To mourn their fading forms with childish tears:  
Gray birch and aspen light she lov'd, that droop  
Fringing the crystal stream ; the sportive breeze  
That wanton'd with her brown and glossy locks,  
The sunbeam chequering the fresh bank. Ere dawn 50  
Wandering, and wandering still at dewy eve,  
By Glenderamakin's flower-empurpled marge,  
Derwent's blue lake, or Greta's wildering glen.

Rare sound to her was human voice, scarce heard,  
Save of her aged nurse, or shepherd maid 55  
Soothing the child with simple tale or song.  
Hence, all she knew of earthly hopes and fears,  
Life's sins and sorrows ; better known the voice

Belov'd of lark from misty morning cloud  
Blithe carolling, and wild melodious notes 60  
Heard mingling in the summer wood, or plaint,  
By moonlight, of the lone night-warbling bird.

Nor they of love unconscious, all around  
Fearless, familiar they their descants sweet  
Tun'd emulous. Her knew all living shapes 65  
That tenant wood or rock, dun roe or deer,  
Sunning his dappled side at noontide crouch'd,  
Courting her fond caress, nor fled her gaze  
The brooding dove, but murmur'd sounds of joy.

One summer noon, the silvery birchen shade 70  
Pendant above from dripping crag her brow  
Veil'd from the fiery sunbeam, gems of spray  
Gleam'd cool around with watery rainbow-light,  
From a pure streamlet down its rocky bed  
Dashing sweet music; she on mossy couch 75  
Sate listening the blithe thrush, whose airy notes  
In amorous contention Echo caught  
Responsive. Sudden droop'd its flagging wing  
The timorous bird of song, and fluttering sought  
Soft refuge in the maiden's snowy breast. 80



She o'er the nestling prisoner folding light  
Her careless vest, stood gazing, where, awhile  
Dark in the sun-cloud's white, came fiercely down  
A swooping falcon : at her sight it check'd ;  
Its keen eye bright with joy, th' admiring bird 85  
Fearfully beauteous floated in the air,  
Its silver wings, and glossy plumage gray,  
Glanc'd in the sun light. Up the maiden gaz'd,  
Smiling a pale and terrified delight,  
And seem'd for that lov'd warbler in her breast 90  
Beseeching mercy. 'Mid the green wood sank  
Th' obedient bird ; she, joyous at his flight,  
Her bosom half reveal'd, with gentle hand  
Caressing smooth'd her captive's ruffled plumes.  
Anon around a frighted thankful look 95  
Glancing, what seem'd a human shape she saw,  
Or more than human ; stately on his arm  
The falcon sate, and proudly flapp'd his wings.  
She turn'd to fly, yet fled not, turn'd to gaze,  
Yet dared not raise her downcast eye ; she felt 100  
Her warm cheek, why she knew not, blush, her hand  
Unconscious closer drew her bosom's fold.

With accent mild the Stranger brief delay  
Entreated; she, albeit his gentle words  
Fell indistinct on her alarmed ear, 105  
Listening delay'd, and still at fall of eve  
Delay'd, e'en then with dim reverted eye,  
Slow lingering on her winding homeward path.

No more in pomp of war, or vaulting steed,  
Joyeth the Son of Vortigern, nor feast 110  
With jocund harplings, and rich-jewell'd dames,  
Outshining in their pride the starry heavens.

As fair the spring-flower's bloom, as graceful droops  
The wild ash spray, as sweet the mountain bee  
Murmurs, melodious breathes the twilight grove, 115  
Unheard of her, unheeded, who erewhile  
Visited, constant as the morning dew,  
Those playmates and sweet sisters of her soul.  
In one sole image sees the enamour'd maid  
Concentrated all qualities of love, 120  
All beauty, grace, and majesty. The step  
Of tall stag prancing stately down the glen,  
The keen bright fierceness of the eagle's glance,  
And airy gentleness of timorous roe,

And, more than all, a voice more soothing soft 125  
Than wild-bird's carol, or the murmuring brook;  
With eloquence endued and melting words  
So wond'rous ; though unheard since eve, the sounds  
Come mingling with her midnight sleep, and make  
The damask of her slumbering cheek grow warm. 130

And she is now beneath the moonlight rock,  
Chiding the rippling waters that efface  
That image on its azure breast distinct,  
Garb, form, and feature, Vortimer ; though mute,  
As prodigal of fondness, his bright face 135  
Looks up to her with glance of tenderer love,  
Than wild-dove to its mate at earliest spring.

Oft hath that moonlight wax'd and wan'd, since last  
He parted, all of him that could depart ;  
Save that no distance could remove the words, 140  
The look, the touch, that lives within her still,  
The promise of return sworn on her lips.

And hark it comes, his steed along the glen ;  
She o'er the lucid mirror stooping, braids  
Hasty her dark-brown tresses, bashful smiles 145  
Of virgin vanity flit o'er her cheek,

Tinging its settled paleness. Now 'tis near,  
But ne'er did Vortimer with iron hoof  
Bruise the green flowery sward that Lilian loves.  
A gentle frown of winning fond reproach 150  
Arch'd her dark eyelash, as her head she turn'd,  
Ah ! not on Vortimer ! Her father stood  
Before her, stern and dark, his trembling child  
Cheer'd nor fond word, nor greeting kiss ; his arm  
Clasp'd round her, on his steed again he sprung. 155  
And on through moon-light and through shade he  
spurr'd,  
Gleam'd like a meteor's track his flinty road,  
Like some rude hunter with a snow-white fawn,  
His midnight prey. Anon, the mountain path  
'Gan upward wind, the fiery courser paus'd 160  
Breathless, and faintly raising her thin form ;  
“ Oh, whither bear ye me ? ” with panting voice,  
Murmur'd. Caswallon spake unmov'd, “ to death.”  
“ Death, father, death is comfortless and cold ?  
Aye me ! when maiden dies, the smiling morn, 165  
The wild birds singing on the twinkling spray,  
Wake her no more ; the summer wind breathes soft,



Waving the fresh grass o'er her narrow bed,  
Gladdening to all but her. Senseless and cold  
She lies ; while all she lov'd, unheard, unseen, 170  
Mourn round her." There broke off her faltering voice.  
Dimly, with farewell glance, she rov'd around,  
Never before so beautiful the lake  
Like a new sky, distinct with stars, the groves,  
Green banks and shadowy dells, her haunts of bliss, 175  
Smil'd, ne'er before so lovely, their last smile ;  
The fountains seem'd to wail, the twilight mists,  
On the wet leaves were weeping all for her.  
Had not her own tears blinded her, there too  
She surely had beheld a youthful form, 180  
Wandering the solitary glen. But loud  
The courser neigh'd, down bursting, wood and rock  
Fly backward, the wide plain its weary length  
Vainly outspreads ; and now 'tis midnight deep.  
Ends at a narrow glen their fleet career. 185  
That narrow glen was pal'd with rude black rocks,  
There slowly roll'd a brook its glassy depth ;  
Now in the moon-beams white, now dark in gloom.  
She liv'd, she breath'd, she felt, to her denied

That sole sad happiness the wretched know, 190  
Ev'n from excess of feeling, not to feel.  
Behold her gentle, delicate, and frail,  
Where all around, through rifted rock and wood,  
Grim features glare, huge helmed forms obscure  
People the living gloom, with dreary light 195  
Glimmering, as of the moon from iron arms  
Coldly reflected, lovely stands she there,  
Like a blest Angel 'mid th' accurst of Hell.  
A voice is heard.—“ Lo, mighty Monarch, here  
The stream of sacrifice ; to man alone 200  
Fits the proud privilege of bloody death  
By shaft or mortal steel ; to Hela's realm,  
Unblooded, woundless, must the maid descend ;  
So in the bright Valhalla shall she crown  
For Woden and his Peers the cup of bliss.” 205  
Her white arms round her father's rugged neck  
Winding with desperate fondness, she 'gan pour,  
As to some dear, familiar, long-lov'd heart,  
Most eloquent her inarticulate prayers.  
Is the dew gleaming on his cheek ? or weeps 210  
The savage and the stern, yet still her sire ?

But some rude arm of one, whose dreadful face  
She dared not gaze on, seiz'd her. Gloomy stood,  
Folding his wolf-skin mantle to conceal  
The shuddering of his huge and mailed form, 215  
Caswallon. Then again the voice came forth,  
“Fast wanes the night, the Gods brook no delay,  
Monarch of Britain, speed.” He, at that name  
Shaking all human from his soul, flung back  
The foldings of his robe, and stood elate, 220  
As haughty of some glorious deed, nor knew  
Barbarian blind as proud, who feels no more  
The mercies and affections of his kind,  
Casts off the image of God, a man of ill,  
With all his nature's earth, without its heaven. 225

A sound is in the silent night abroad,  
A sound of broken waters ; rings of light  
Float o'er the dark stream, widening to the shore.\*

\* Homo autem quem sors immolandum obtulerat, in fontem qui ad locum sacrificiorum scaturiebat vivus immergebatur: qui si facile efflaret animam, faustum renunciabant sacerdotes votum : moxque inde ereptum in vicinum nemus, quod sacrum credebant, suspendentes, inter Deos translatum affirmabant. Quo factum erat, ut beatum se crederet, qui eò immolatione e vivis

And lo, her re-appearing form, as soft  
As fountain Nymph by weary hunter seen, 230  
In the lone twilight glen; the moonlight gleam  
Falls tenderly on her beseeching face,  
Like th' halo of expiring Saint, she seems  
Lingering to lie upon the water top,  
As to enjoy once more that light belov'd; 235  
And tremulously mov'd her soundless lips  
As syllabling the name of Vortimer;  
Then deep she sank, and quiet the cold stream,  
Unconscious of its guilt went eddying on,  
And look'd up lovely to the gazing moon. 240

What deepest thoughts, young Vortimer, have place  
Within thy secret breast? thou slowly rid'st  
By Eamont's alder brink, thy silver arms  
Through the brown copse with moonshine glittering dim.  
Is't that late fight by Thanet, when the fire 245

*excederet. Accidit nonnunquam reges ipsos simili sorte delectos victimari. Quod quia faustissimum regno libamen æstimabatur, totius populi multitudo cum summâ congratulatione tam insignes victimas prosequabantur. Enimvero sic defunctos non omnino mori, sed tam illos quam se ipsos immortales esse. Olaus Magnus, Book 3. cap. 6.*



From thine and Horsa's steel, frequent and red,  
Burnt the pale sea-spray ? or thy stately charge,  
With show of British war, to curb and check  
The threatening Caledonian ? or what bathes  
Youth's cheek in bitterest and most gall-like tears ; 250  
Thy father's shame, the curse that, unredeem'd  
By thy young valour, his once kingly name  
Brands with the deep-sear'd characters of hate ?

Or is't that gentle Maid by Derwent lake,  
Her flower-wreath'd tresses and her pale sweet smile ?  
How pleasant, after war and journeying fleet 256  
To Britain's Northern realm, from Kent's white cliffs,  
Once more to see her early gliding foot  
Skimming the morning dews, to hear her voice,  
As artless, as melodious, melt on air, 260  
Among the wood-birds matins to surprise  
Thine own dear name upon her bashful lips !

What floateth down the stream a deep dead white  
Amid the glittering moonshine, where the stream  
Runs black beneath the thicket boughs, still white, 265  
Still slowly drifting, like a dying swan,  
In snowy beauty, on its watery bier ?

Oh, were but Lilian here ! perchance its neck  
May struggle up, to the still waves to chaunt  
Its own soft requiem, the most gentle breath, 270  
Most fancifully, delicately sweet,  
That ever soothes the midnight's dewy calm.

Near, and more near, it takes a human shape :  
Some luckless maiden ; haply her lov'd youth  
Awaits her at the well known place, upbraids 275  
Her broken faith, as fond as Vortimer,  
As full of love. 'Tis closer now ; he leaps  
From his high steed, he draws it to the shore.  
Scarce time for fancy or for fear, the moon  
Quench'd her broad light behind a rushing cloud, 280  
And utter darkness settled round. He sate  
In solitude, with that cold lifeless thing ;  
He dared not leave it, for a hideous thought  
Was in his brain.—“ Why is it like to thee,  
My Lilian ! be it any one but thou— 285  
Hopelessly cold, irrevocably cold :  
It cannot be, and yet 'twas like : her height,  
Her slender waist like Lilian's, and her hair  
As dainty soft, and trick'd with flowers ; 'tis she,

And I will kiss her, pardon if I err, 290  
If stranger lips—round, smooth like thine; but oh!  
So coldly passive! when we parted, thine  
Thwarted me with a struggling bashfulness,  
And, won at length, with meek surrender swell'd.  
Wild and delirious fancy! many a maid 295  
Hath full round lips, to trick the hair with flowers  
'Tis common vanity. If dead, even dead,  
So chilly senseless Lilian could not be  
To Vortimer's embrace. Oh, but for light,  
Though dim and scanty as a glow-worm's fire, 300  
To make me surely, hopelessly undone!  
Aught but this racking ignorance. Dawn forth,  
Thou tortoise-footed sluggard, Morn! one beam,  
Thou pitiless cold Moon!"—Morn dawn'd not yet,  
And pale and thick remain'd the moonless sky. 305  
Darkness around, the dead within his arms,  
He sate, even like a poison'd man, that waits,  
Yet haunted by a miserable hope,  
The palpable cold sickness in his veins,  
And yearns to live or die, scarce cares he which, 310  
So one were certain. But when slow the dawn

Unveil'd its filmy light, he turn'd away  
From that which might be Lilian's face, and pray'd  
Even for the hateful, dun, uncertain gloom,  
As now by habit the slow-creeping grief, 315  
Winding like ivy round and round his heart,  
Were rapture, and not lightly to be lost.  
It seem'd unconsciously his hand held up,  
Unconsciously declin'd his heavy eye,  
Where slowly brighten'd on that lifeless face 320  
The intrusive beauty ; one tress lay across,  
O'erspreading yet a thin and shadowy doubt ;  
Move it he dare not, but the officious wind  
At length dispers'd it. As the thought, the fear  
Were new, were sudden, like the lightning flash 325  
That sears the infant in its mother's arms,  
Smote on him the dire certainty. He clasp'd  
Her damp dead cheek to his.—“ Thus, meet we thus,  
Lilian, my Lilian, silent, strange, and cold ?  
I do not bid thee fondly gaze, nor ask 330  
Long garrulous welcoming,—but speak, but move !  
Lilian ; ne'er thought I, I should live to loathe  
Thy gentle presence.—Most ungrateful girl,



And I for thee forsook my warrior trust,  
Was truant to my country's cause for thee. 335  
By the green Tees my murmuring camp upbraids  
My soft unwarlike absence—aye, upbraid !  
Henceforth finds Fortune no where on this soul  
To fasten misery on ; I laugh at Fate,  
For I am past its wavering malice now. 340  
Thinks she with hollow gauds of fame, and clang  
Of cymbal praise, to lure me forth, a bland  
And courteous parasite in her fond train ?  
No ; hang thou there, my helm, my broad-barr'd shield  
Rust on yon bank, my sword, one duty more, 345  
To shape the smooth turf for my Lilian's grave ;  
Thy bridal bed, sweet Maid, it should have been,  
Where thou and Vortimer had met. Thy grave  
Shall be my field of fame, my wreath of pride  
The flowers the courteous spring shall lavish there ;  
And I'll have glory—in my depth of woe— 351  
A wild and strange delight—in my despair—  
Not yet, the cold earth must not part us yet,  
One glimmer more from thine eye's dark-fring'd blue,  
One throb, one tremor, though it be the last 355  
In thy soft limbs—dead, sightless, icy dead !”—

O'er his lost Love, thus that sad Prince, undream'd  
The hell-born secret of her fate, arraign'd  
Blind Chance for keen-ey'd Man's earth-sullyng sins.

But southward far the savage fleet bore on. 360  
On Flamborough-head the morning sun look'd dusk  
Through their dim sails; where Scarborough's naked foot  
Spurns back, and saith, "no further," to the waves,  
From cleft and cave the sullen sea-birds sprang,  
Wheeling in air with dizzy flight, and shriek'd 365  
Their dreary fears abroad. The Shepherd, wont  
O'er level Lindesay view the watery plain,  
Blue trembling to the soft horizon's line,  
Secs, like a baleful portent from the heavens,  
That sable train of gloom warp slowly past. 370  
Th' Icenian coast (that scepter'd woman's realm,  
Bonduca, who from her fair body slaked  
The stain of Roman lust in Roman blood,)  
Looks haggard, with distracted faces wan,  
Hoar age, fair youth, the woman and the child, 375  
From beech or steep cliff, gazing now to Heaven,  
Now on that ocean army's watery march.

Oh Nelson ! if the unborn soul distinct  
Amid the loose infinity of space,

Be visited by apparitions dim 380  
Of this earth's fleeting Present, and inhale  
Faint foretaste of its mortal passions, thou,  
When, with usurping prow, that foreign fleet  
Daunted thy Britain, thou didst surely yearn  
To unordain'd maturity to force 385  
Thy unripe being, to foreseize from Fate  
Thy slow existence. Oh, the days must dawn,  
When Saxon and when Briton, melted off  
All feud, all hate, all discord, of their strength  
And valour blent th' abstract and essence rich, 390  
One sword, one name, one glory, and one God,  
From their bright armoury of Captains, thee  
Their chosen thunderbolt shall usher forth,  
From the leagued Nations' frantic grasp to wrest  
Britain's allotted sceptre of the sea. 395

A brighter and more British battlement,  
Than tender forms of women, the pale dread  
Of infants and decrepit eld, from Thames  
To Thanet crown the pale-brow'd cliffs of Kent,  
As when from Aulis that immortal fleet 400  
Swept the Ægean, all the hollow beach,

And every Phrygian promontory glōw'd  
With brazen battle, here the Mōrning's Son,  
Swarth Memnon, here the invulnerable strength  
Of Cycnus, here the beardless Troilus, 405  
Unwounded by soft Cresseide's arrowy eyes;  
Here Hector, seeking through the watery route  
The tall Thessalian prow, with fatal thirst  
Furious even then, the silver-footed Queen  
To orphan of her heaven-soul'd boy. So broad, 410  
So brave in splendour tower'd the rampart bold  
Of British Warriors on that pallid shore.

On Thanet are the Sea King Brethren met.  
Their greeting in that fiercely sportive strain  
That, elevate with imminent success, 415  
Scoffs at past ill.—“ On Thanet's marge well met,  
Erle Horsa; now meseems our spacious realm  
Is somewhat waste and shrunken, since we last  
View'd its fair confines, for such noble guests  
And numerous as attend our royal march, 420  
Our kingdom's harbours shew too close, our land  
Narrow and brief for such free spirits' range.  
Ill husbandry ! our fertile province wide



To barter for this spare and meagre isle.

Horsa, for anchorage and breathing space 425

Our weary mariners must e'en go sue

Their gentle Briton neighbours ; haply they,

Knowing our native courtesy, may cede

From their abundance some fair leagues of earth.

“ Ingrate and blind (cried Horsa), they forswear 430

Our mild dominion ; to their King's behest

Rebellious, they proclaim the British earth

The undivided, indivisible right

Of their old British sires, nor may't descend

Sever'd and mutilate to their British sons. 435

They shook not off the Roman's gentle sway,

To slave it to Barbarians. Specious terms,

And with such cogent arguments enforc'd,

We were fain shroud us in this narrow isle

From such hot disputants ; a desperate spirit 440

Was that old Cæsar, who first planted here

The tree of conquest.”—“ Holds the King his faith?”

“ Oh, thy fair daughter hath a soft-link'd chain

For the old royal Lion ; he obeys,

Like a slim greyhound in a silken leash, 445

Her eye-won empire. But there walks abroad  
A youngling of the brood ; no blood but mine  
Might flesh the ravine of his dainty jaws.  
This Vortimer, this bright-ey'd, beardless boy.  
Aye, front to front I met him, but their bands 450  
Rent us asunder, and my crest-lopp'd helm,  
My scatter'd blood, pass'd unaveng'd. Now earth  
Swallow me in my wrath, heaven's bolt sear up  
My constant heart, if I forget thee, Boy,  
Nor shear the gay sprouts of thy budding fame !" 455  
" A child their mightiest !"—" Scornful Hengist, no ;  
A manlier spirit rideth the fierce storm,  
One in whom bravery and counsel vie  
For excellence : wild battle wears the shape  
His will ordains ; and if the rebel swerve, 460  
He forceth it with his strong sword t' obey  
His high behest, and take the fate he gives."  
" His name—his name !"—" The Chieftain of the Vales,  
So sounds his title."—Then a bitter groan,  
"Twere hard to tell from what bad passion, hate 465  
Or dread, or hideous hope, from Hengist's breast  
Burst forth, with his mail'd hand he clasp'd his head,

As though to mould the discord of his thoughts  
To one strong mass : then, as the birth were ripe,  
A light and laughing carelessness relax'd 470  
Those knitted furrows, seem'd his eager soul  
Clasp'd the dim future with a wanton joy.

But on the mainland, in sad council, meet  
The Baronage of Britain, timorons hearts  
In hollow unsubstantial valour trick'd, 475  
While those who dare shew fear, fear undisguis'd.  
Their first fierce rush of courage pass'd, like flame  
The mountain heath devouring, with fleet blaze,  
But transitory ; they of generous thoughts,  
Of appetites whose sole rich draught is fame, 480  
Wanting the steadfast fuel, the strong wind  
Wanting of love devotional, heart-deep  
To their own native land, that passion proud  
That is all passions, that hath breath to fan  
To a broad light beyond the noon-day Sun 485  
The waning embers of faint zeal ; they hence  
Powerful but now with gallant charge to sweep  
From Kent's fair Valleys Horsa's Saxon train,  
Downcast in mien and mind, with prospect sad  
Now count that countless navy's gathering sails. 490

Not now the rapture and the restlessness,  
The riding and the racing, burst and shock,  
And sudden triumph, or as sudden death ;  
Now long, long wasting of the limbs and life,  
The circumspect cold strife, drear march, damp watch,  
Forepining day, and vigilant sleepless night, 496  
Eternal and interminable war,  
Before them spreads its comfortless wide tract.  
Gone all soft joys, all courtly luxuries gone :  
The languor of the bath, the harp, the song 500  
By twilight in the lady's sleepless porch,  
The loitering in the sunny colonnade,  
The circus, and the theatre, the feast  
Usurping the mild midnight's solemn hours ;  
From holier hearts, the chapel and the prayer, 505  
The matins, and melodious vesper hymn,  
The bridal with its gay and jocund route,  
The baptism with its revel, gone—all gone.  
The burial on cold battle field, unhymn'd,  
Unmourn'd, untomb'd ; nor taper, tear, nor rite : 510  
Gentle commercing between God and man  
Broke off, save hasty prayer ere battle morn,  
Cold orison upon the midnight watch.



Sole pillar of the quaking temple, firm,  
Inflexible, on the foundation deep 515  
Of his broad spirit, Samor bears the weight  
Of imminent danger, and his magic voice  
With shame, with praise, with soothing, and with scorn,  
Scatters the languid mist, that wreathes their souls,  
And from their blanch'd cheeks drives the white dismay.

What ho! a trumpet from the Thanet shore, 521  
Truce for the Saxon's embassy; his hand  
Outholding the white wand of peace, comes on  
Old Cerdic, and before the assemblage proud  
Speaks frank and bold that gray Plenipotent. 525

“ Britons, most strange ’twill sound, while our vast fleet  
Affronts your pale cliffs with fierce shew of war,  
Yet would we peace with Britain. Deem not this,  
In the blown arrogance of brief success,  
The hard-wrung cowering of faint fear; look round 530  
Your own brief camp, then gaze abroad, our sails  
Outnumber your thin helms, and that pale fear  
Is not familiar with our German souls.

This know ye further, what we Saxons dare,  
That dare we nobly, openly. Far south 535

A rich and wanton land its champaign green  
Spreads to the sun, there all the basking hills  
Glow with the red wine, there the fresh air floats  
So fragrant, that 'tis pleasure but to breathe,  
Aye one blue summer in the cloudless skies ; 540  
And our old Bards have legends, how of yore  
From that soft land bright eagles, fledged with gold,  
Danube or Rhine o'erflew, their Cæsars fired  
Our holy groves with insolent flames, and girt  
Our fierce free foresters with slavish chains, 545  
That scarce bold Herman rent their massive links.  
Not to despoil a mild and gentle isle,  
For full fierce vengeance on Imperial Rome  
Pours forth embattled Germany. Then hear,  
Brave islanders ! our Saxon terms of peace : 550  
For this fair province, our's by royal boon  
Of your King Vortigern give plenteous gold ;  
And with it take the gift, that deepest wrings  
Our German souls to part with, our revenge.  
With most unwonted patience will we bear 555  
Erle Horsa's camp with fierce assault o'erborne,  
And British wolves full-gorged with Saxon gore.

Then not as foes, but friends, we disembark  
Our sea-worn crews, ourselves, the Chiefs of war,  
In solemn festival to your high Lords, 560  
Pledge on the compact our unwavering faith.  
But if ye still with lavish thirst pursue  
War's crimson goblets, freely let them flow.  
If the fierce pastime of the fire and sword  
Be jocund to ye, ho, let slip the game. 565  
Your city walls are not so airy high,  
But our fleet flames may climb their dizzy towers,  
And revel on their pinnacles of pride ;  
Your breastplates not so adamant proof,  
But our keen falchions to your hearts may find 570  
A direful passage. And not we alone,  
Caswallon, at our call, o'er the wide North  
Wakes the hoarse music of his rushing cars ;  
Then choose your bride, oh Britons, lo, each courts  
Your arms with rival beauties, Peace and War." 575

Thus half in courtesy, defiant half,  
To wait their answer he withdrew. Ere died  
His voice, ere from a single lip assent  
Had parted, Samor rose, and cried aloud—

“ Britons ! oh Britons ! hinds fear fawning wolves, 580  
The peasant flies the snake that smoothly coils  
Round his numb foot its gay enamell’d rings ;  
I dread a peaceful Saxon. ’Tis too rare,  
Prodigious, and unnatural, like a star  
Seen in the noon day. Was’t for this, for this 585  
Round Vortigern’s tame soul that proud-ey’d Queen  
Wound her voluptuous trammels ? did the meek,  
The hermit Constans, bleed for this ? Oh, Peace  
Is like the rain from heaven, the clouds must burst  
Ere earth smile lovely with its lucid dew. 590  
Peace must be won by war, swords, swords alone  
Work the strong treaty. Shall our slaves, that sold  
Their blood, their lives unto us for base hire,  
On our fair provinces set now their price ?  
Nor feast, nor metal give we, but cold steel ! 595  
Give gold ! as wisely might the miser lead  
The robber to his treasury, and then cry,  
“ Go hence, and plunder ; ” ’twere to tempt, to bribe  
The undream’d perjury, and spread a lure,  
To bring the parted spoiler swiftly back. 600  
Outnumber us ! and are we sunk so low



To count our valour by our helmet crests?—  
Oh, every soul that loves his native land,  
It is a legion; where the fire shall sear  
The hydra heads of liberty? Our earth 605  
Shall burst to bearing of as boon a crop  
Of sworded soldiers, as of bladed grass,  
And all our hills branch out in groves of steel.  
So thought our fathers, so they bravely strove  
For the bleak freedom of their steamy moors, 610  
Their black oak's fruitage coarse, and rites uncouth  
Of Druid, by the beal-fire's lurid flame.  
But we, less drossy beings, filter'd off  
Our natures rude and gross, create anew  
Souls of fine wants and delicate desires, 615  
Rich in the fair civilities of life,  
Endued with sensitiveness keen and clear  
Of earth's best pleasures, shall we tamely yield  
Our beauteous Britain, our own pleasant isle,  
To dreary-soul'd Barbarians? 'Tis not now 620  
Merely to 'scape the heaven-branded name of slaves,  
For license to breathe where we choose, and wield  
At our own wayward will unfetter'd limbs.

Oh, if we fail, free Christians must sink down  
To Heathen slaves, our gilded palace roofs 625  
Shout the loose riot of new Lords, our wives  
Be like base plunder, vilely bought and sold;  
Worse shame ! worse sin ! the murky Heathen groves  
O'er our fallen Churches their pale gloom advance ;  
Our holy air go hot and reeking up 630  
With impious incense to blood-beverag'd Gods ;  
The deep damnation of a Pagan creed  
Rot in our children's souls ! Then be our peace  
Not hasty, as of timorous souls that snatch  
At every feeble reed, but stoop we to it 635  
As with a conqueror's pride, with steel-glov'd hand  
Seal our stern treaty. So if they depart,  
And with their spread sails hunt their mad emprise ;  
But while one prow dash menace on our shore,  
Our earth be patient of one armed hoof, 640  
Tame treaty, temporizing truce, avaunt !  
The foreign banner that usurps our winds,  
Be it a foe, strange steel that doth divert  
One ray of sunlight from our shores, be that  
The scope and centre of all British swords. 645

So build we up our peace on the strong rock  
Of brave defiance, cement it with scorn,  
Set bright-arm'd Valour in its jealous porch,  
Bold warden; from our own intrinsic strength,  
Not from the mercy of our foes, be free."— 650

Oh the soul's fire, of that swift element  
Th' intensest, broadest spreads and nimblest mounts,  
With flaky fierce contagion; it hath caught  
In that Baronial conclave, it hath blazed.  
But then rose Elidure, with bashful mien, 655  
Into himself half shrinking, from his lips  
The dewy words dropt, delicate and round,  
And crept into the chambers of the soul,  
Like the bee's liquid honey:—"And thou too,  
Enamour'd of this gaudy murderer, War! 660  
Samor, in hunger's meagre hour who scorns  
A fair-skinn'd fruit, because its inward pulp  
May be or black or hollow? this bland Peace  
May be a rich-rob'd evil; war, stern war,  
Wears manifest its hideousness, and bares 665  
Deformities the Sun shrinks to behold.  
Because 'tis in the wanton roll of chance

That he may die, who desperately leaps  
Into the pit, with mad untimely arms  
To clasp annihilation? Were no path  
But through the grim and haunted wilds of strife,  
To the mild shrine of peace, maids would not wear  
Their bridal chaplets with more joy, than I  
Th' oppressive morion: then th' old vaunt were wise,  
To live in freedom, or for freedom die. 675  
Then would I too dissemble, with vain boast,  
Our island's weakness; wear an iron front,  
Though all within were silken, soft, and smooth.  
For what are we, slight sunshine birds, thin plum'd  
For dalliance with the mild, luxurious airs, 680  
To grapple with these vultures, whose broad vans,  
Strung with their icy tempests, but with wind  
Of their forth rushing down would swoop us? Then,  
Then, Samor, eminent in strength and power,  
It were most proud for thee alone to break 685  
The hot assault, with single arm t' arrest  
The driving ruin—ruin, ah! too sure.  
Oh, 'twere most proud; to us sad comfort; sunk,  
Amere'd of all our fair, smooth sliding hours,



Our rich abodes the wandering war-flame's feast. 690  
Samor, our fathers fear'd not death ; cast off  
Most careless their coarse lives ; with nought to lose,  
They fear'd no loss ; our breathing is too rich,  
Too precious this our sensitive warm mould,  
Its joyances, affections, hopes, desires, 695  
For such light venture. Oh, then, be we not  
Most wretched from the fear of wretchedness ?  
If war must be, in God's name let war be :  
But, oh, with clinging hand, with lingering love,  
Clasp we our mistress, Peace. Gold ! what is gold ? 700  
My fair and wealthy palace set to sale,  
Cast me a beggar to the elements' scorn ;  
But leave me peace, oh, leave my country peace,  
And I will call it mercy, bounty, love !"—

So spake he, with vain shew of public zeal 705  
Blazoning his weak intent ; and so prevail'd  
His loose and languid eloquence. Each rent  
The golden frontlet from his helm, cast down  
His breastplate's golden scales, in contest free  
Prodigal rivals at rich price to buy 710  
That baleful merchandize, their country's shame.

Oh, where the royal Brethren now? the pride  
Serene of Emrys? where thy Dragon crest,  
Prince Uther? for thy voice, young Vortimer!  
Seal, Samor, thy prophetic lips; in vain 715  
The trumpet of thy warning shouts abroad.

Will the winds hear thee? will the rocks obey?  
Or hearts than wind more light, than rocks more cold?

Gray Cerdic hath their faint award; they part  
Jocund, and light of hope; but Samor grasp'd 720  
The hand of Elidure:—"My childhood's friend,  
I sue thee by all joys we two have shared,  
Our interchange of souls, communion free  
Of every thought and motion of our hearts,  
Our infant pastimes, and our graver joys, 725  
Go not thou to this feast."—"Doth Samor go?"  
"Britain must have no danger, gentle friend,  
That Samor shares not; thou art noted well  
To hate the riotous and brawling feast.

With thy fond bride, thy Evelene, await 730  
Silent the knowledge whether thou or I  
Have err'd in this day's council."—"No, best friend,  
Samor must have no danger Elidure

Shares not; oh, why this cold and gloomy dread?  
In the deep centre of our isle be held 735  
This dreaded banquet. Samor, ne'er thought I,  
While my mild blood ran constant, thine would flag,  
And curdle with the pallid frost of fear."

'Tis famed, that then, albeit amid the rush  
Of clamorous joy unmark'd in drearier days 740  
Remember'd, signs on earth, and signs in heaven,  
With loud and solemn interdict arraign'd  
That hasty treaty; maniacs kindled up  
With horrible intelligence the pits  
Of their deep hollow eyes, and meaning strange 745  
Gave order to their wandering utterance: stream'd  
Amid the dusky woods broad sheeted flames;  
The blue fires on the fen at noon-day danc'd  
Their wavering morrice, and the bold ey'd wolves  
Howl'd on the sun. Life ominous and uncouth 750  
Seiz'd upon ancient and forgotten things;  
The Cromlechs rock'd, the Druid circles wept  
Cold ruddy dews; as of that neighbouring feast  
Conscious, the tall Stone Henge did shrilly shriek  
As with a whirlwind, though no cloud was mov'd 755

In the still skies. A wailing, as of harps,  
Sad with no mortal sorrow, sail'd abroad  
Through the black oaks of Mona. Old deep graves  
Were restless, and arm'd bones of buried men  
Lay clattering in their stony cells. 'Twas faith, 760  
White women upon sable steeds were seen  
In fleet career 'neath the rank air; the earth  
Gave up no echo to their noiseless feet,  
And on them look'd the moon with leprous light  
Prodigious; haply like those slender shapes 765  
In the ice desart by Caswallon seen.  
From Mona to the snowy Dover cliffs,  
From Skiddaw to St. Michael's vision'd mount,  
Unknown from heaven, or earth, or nether pit,  
Unknown or from the living or the dead, 770  
From being of this world, or nature higher,  
Pass'd one long shriek, whereat old Merlin leap'd  
From his hoar haunt by Snowdon, and in dusk  
And dreary descant mutter'd all abroad  
What the thin air grew cold and dim to hear. 775

'Tis said, rude portents in the Church of God,  
With insolent noises, brake the holy calm.



The gray owl hooted at the noontide chaunt,  
The young owl clamour'd at the matin song,  
The pies and ravens, from the steeple top, 780  
To the priest's Benedicite moan'd back  
A sullen hoarse Amen, and obscene bats  
Around the altar candlesticks did flap  
Their leathern wings. Yea, from his stricken hand  
The white stol'd Bishop to the earth let fall 785  
The consecrated chalice; th' holy wine  
(Ineffable !) flow'd on the pavement stone.

## BOOK V.

SWAN of the Ocean, on thy throne of waves  
Exultant dost thou sit, thy mantling plumes  
Ruffled with joy, thy pride of neck elate,  
To hail fair peace, like Angel visitant,  
Descending, amid joy of earth and heaven, 5  
To bless thy fair abode. The laughing skies  
Look bright, oh, Britain ! on thy hour of bliss.  
In sunshine fair the blithe and bounteous May  
O'er hill and vale goes dancing ; blooming flowers  
Under her wanton feet their dewy bells 10  
Shake joyous ; clouds of fragrance round her float.  
City to city cries, and town to town  
Wafting glad tidings : wide their flower-hung gates  
- Throw back the churches, resonant with pomp

Of priests and people, to the Lord their prayers 15  
Pouring, the richest incense of pure hearts.  
With garland and with song the maids go forth,  
And mingle with the iron ranks of war  
Their forms of melting softness; gentle gales  
Blow music o'er the festal land, from harp 20  
And merry rebeck, till the floating air  
Seem harmony; still all fierce sounds of war;  
No breath within the clarion's brazen throat;  
Soft slumber in the war-steed's drooping mane.

Not in the palace proud, or gorgeous hall, 25  
The banqueting of Peace; on Ambri plain  
Glitter the white pavilions to the sun  
Their snowy pomp unfolding; there the land  
Pours its rejoicing multitudes to gaze,  
Briton and Saxon, in majestic league, 30  
Mingling their streaming banners blazon'd waves.  
Blithe as a virgin bridal, rich and proud  
As gorgeous triumph for fair kingdom won,  
Flows forth the festal train, with arms clate  
The Mothers bear their infants to behold 35  
That Hengist, whose harsh name erewhile their cheeks

Blanch'd to cold paleness ; they their little hands  
Clap, smiling, half delighted, half in dread.  
Upon that hated head, from virgin hands,  
Rain showers of bloom ; beneath those hated feet 40  
Is strewn a flowery pavement ; harp and voice  
Hymn blessings on the Saxon, late denounc'd  
Th' implacable, inexorable foe.

Lordly they pass'd and lofty ; other land  
Save Britain, of such mighty despots proud, 45  
Had made a boast of slavery ; giant men  
In soul as body. Not the Goth more dread,  
Tall Alaric, who through imperial Rome  
March'd conqueror, nor that later Orient chief,  
Turban'd Mohammed, who o'er fall'n Byzance 50  
His moony ensign planted : they, unarm'd,  
Yet terrible, went haughty on, of power  
A world to vanquish, not one narrow isle.

The hollow vault of heav'n is rent with shouts,  
Wild din and hurry of tumultuous joy 55  
Waves the wide throng, for lo, in perfect strength,  
Consummate height of manhood, but the glow,  
The purple grace of youth, th' ambrosial hue



Of life's fresh morning, on his glossy hair,  
His smooth and flushing features, Samor comes. 60  
His name is on the lisping infant's lips,  
Floats on the maiden's song ; him warrior men  
Hail with proud crest elate ; him present, deem  
Peace timorous mercy on the invading foe.  
Around the Kings of Britain, some her shame, 65  
Downy and silken with luxurious ease,  
Others more hardy, in whose valiant looks  
Were freedom and command : of princely stem  
Alone were absent the forsaken King  
And his sad Son, and those twin royal youths, 70  
Emrys and Uther ; nor the Mountain Lord,  
With that young eaglet of his race, deign share  
The gaudy luxuries of peace ; save these,  
All Britain's valiance, pryncedom, and renown  
March'd jubilant, with symphony and song. 75

Noon ; from his high empyreal throne the Sun  
Floods with broad light the living plain ; more rich  
Ne'er blaz'd his summer couch, when sea and sky,  
In royal pomp of cloudy purple and gold,  
Curtain his western chambers, breathing men 80

Gorgeous and numberless as those bright waves  
Flash, in their motion, the quick light ; aloof  
The banqueters, like Gods at nectar feast,  
Sit sumptuous and pavilion'd ; all glad tones  
From trembling string, or ravishing breath or voice, 85  
In clouds of harmony melt up to Heaven ;  
O'erwhelming splendour all of sight and sound,  
One rich oppression of eye, ear, and mind.

Midnight, in darkness heavy, thick, and chill ;  
In silence rigid, deep and breathless, stands 90  
On the wide plain one lonely man. Wan light,  
From dim decaying firebrand in his grasp,  
Feebly, with gleam inconstant, shews his mien  
Hopeless, too haughty to despair : His eye,  
As jealous of dark foe, goes wandering round : 95  
Yet seems he one more fear'd than fearing ; rent  
His robes' rich splendour ; and his ponderous arm,  
With its wild weapon wearily declin'd,  
Bears token of rude strife—though rude, though fierce,  
By thy brow's pride, thou sad and stately Man ! 100  
No faint inglorious craven hast thou shrunk,  
In dread of death, or avarice base of blood.

At that dead hour, in Cæsar's city \* gates  
The Briton wives and mothers sate ; at eve  
They from the plain, had homeward turn'd, to rock 105  
Their infants' rosy sleep, or trim the couch  
For him belov'd and loving ; some, from joy  
Sleepless, sate watching the gray shadows fall,  
In luxury of impatience ; slumbering some,  
From weariness of pleasure, in light dreams 110  
Liv'd o'er again the morning's jocund hours. .

That hour, one horn with long and solemn blast  
Went wailing up the heavens ; less shrill, less drear,  
Blew through the fatal Roncesvalles pass,  
In after times, Roland's deep bugle, heard 115  
Dolorous, so poets feign, on Paris' wall.  
The air seem'd shivering where the knell pass'd on,  
As with a cold wind shudder'd the thick trees.

But those fond women hail that brazen sound,  
Joy's harbinger, sweet signal of return ; 120  
As the fond maid her lover's moonlight lute,  
Thep drink in its dire harshness, busy round  
Gazing, if aught neglected, careless aught

\* Salisbury.—Sarisburga, qu. Cæsaris burga.

Belic the welcome, or to wakening child  
Smile the glad tidings, or along the walls 125  
People the dim air with the forms they love.  
Oh, fond of fancy ! credulous of hope !  
Ye hear but pleasure in that horn ; but see,  
In the dim tumult of yon moving lights,  
Swift homeward hurrying. Now the slow delay 130  
Is but a lengthen'd rapture : steps are heard,  
And figures indistinct are in the gloom  
Advancing ; yet no festal pomp proclaim'd  
By music's merry breath, but mute and slow,  
As from dark funeral : haply wearied all 135  
With the long revel day. But ye 'gin trace  
Some well-known gesture, dear familiar step,  
Each boastful of her lover's speedier pacc.  
Saxon the first, how wearily slow they pass !  
Still are they Saxon, Saxon still, the last 140  
Saxon ; in wonder they, nor yet in fear,  
Question the dark air with their searching eyes,  
Incredulous arraign the deepening gloom,  
That with an envious melancholy shroud  
Palls the long-look'd for, late-returning. Them, 145



Ah, deeper darkness covers ; to their homes  
Never more to return ! Lo, all at once  
The bloody knives, borne boastful, their red light  
Flash murderous ; known is all ere aught is fear'd.  
And yet are there unfaded on their brows 150  
The garlands that ye fondly wove, the air  
Not silent of your blessings. From these walls,  
At morn, three hundred breathing valiant men  
Went proudly forth—in solitary life  
Moves o'er the plain that one majestic shape, 155  
Like Spirit of Vengeance o'er some ghastly land  
That scoff'd erewhile, in high portentous guilt,  
The slumbering of God's wrath, now blasted lies,  
Infecting with the ashes of its wreck  
The late chastising heavens. So lone, so dark, 160  
But pale with human sorrows at his heart,  
The King of that Bright City in the Vales,  
Walks the waste gloom, around him the cold winds  
Speak voices from the dead, and oft he turns,  
Brandishing defiance on the air, and smites 165  
Some seeming Saxon with his smouldering brand.  
Now rests he in that old mysterious ring,

The dateless and the numberless Stonehenge,  
That is, and hath been, whence or how, none knows.  
But even the Master Druid with slow dread 170  
Its dangerous precincts trod, though noontide bright  
Revell'd in the rich heavens, and holiest harps  
Purified the calm air: rose like the wreck  
Of some old world the shadowy temple huge,  
Shapeless magnificence! here souls profane 175  
Deem'd rites so potent held as made the oaks  
Stand still and motionless 'mid the wild storm,  
And with a light, nor of the stars nor moon,  
Sheeted the midnight heavens: deem'd some, more sage,  
Th' Invisible his cloudy presence here 180  
Embodied, and with wisdom heavenly and high  
Full feasted the tranced soul; all the dire place  
Fled, fearing more, unknowing what they fear'd.

Amid those stony giants that uptower  
In massy darkness, or in the wind's rush 185  
Seem swaying on their dizzy balance, stands,  
If virtue of aught earthly may feel awe,  
Awe-struck the Christian; now his calmer soul  
Had time for grief, for memory, o'er him flows

Deep-lulling quiet ; here the light and gay 190  
Had felt a motion on their lips like prayer,  
Nor marvel then that holy thoughts oppress'd  
With a full extacy the Christian soul.

“ Merciful ! by whose will mine arm hath pav'd  
With the strewn corpses of my murtherous foes 195  
A dismal passage, while around me Death  
Mow'd Britain with his secret scythe ! oh God,  
I thank thee, if I die, a warrior's death  
May be my brave distinction : if this life  
Be worthy thy upholding, though all lost, 200  
The friendships and the prides, that made its course  
Blissful and bright, I thank thee for my life :  
Thank thee, that yet on British earth shall breathe  
A Briton, resolute on that last crag,  
That knows not the rude Saxon's tread, to rise 205  
Erect in stately freedom, and o'er-brood  
The dim and desert beacon of revenge.  
Or deign'st thou this low frame of dust to choose  
Thy minister of wrath, I not with prayer  
Vain and presumptuous, summon from the clouds 210  
Thy thunders, nor invoke prodigious Death

To smite my foes. Hopes perishable man,  
At his wild bidding, thou the laws wilt burst,  
Wherewith thou fetterest thy Omnipotence?  
Harden to stern endurance these frail limbs, 215  
With adamantine patience sheathe my soul,  
That nor pale shrinking of the coward flesh,  
Nor inward palsyng swerve from its brave scope  
Th' aspiring spirit; grant thou this sole prayer,  
And I thus lone, thus desolate proclaim, 220  
Single, yet dauntless, to yon Saxon host  
Stubborn defiance, haughty to bear up  
The wreck of Britain with unstooping neck."

Now over all the orient sky, the Morn  
Spread rosy in her youth of light, as fair, 225  
As bright her rising on this plain of death,  
As yesterday, when festal multitudes  
Greeted her dawn; so vain the boast of man,  
That earth, and air, and sky, their mimic hues  
Borrow from his fantastic woes and joys. 230

And o'er the plain began his lonely way  
The Warrior, on his brow the unheeded wind  
Fann'd freshness, and the wandering lark unheard,



Quiver'd her blithe song, like an airy voice,  
Bathing in light. Anon a dale beneath 235  
Open'd, and slow withdrew the misty veil  
That o'er her hamlets roofs and bowery trees  
Ting'd with a liquid azure the thin air.  
Along the winding path he roves, that none,  
Save feet habituate to its maze, could thread, 240  
Heedless that here to Elidure's green home  
He came, unweeting visitant. Within,  
Breathless, as though she listen'd in her sleep,  
Close to the door, as jealous lest some ear  
Earlier than her own should catch the sound 245  
Of Elidure's returning tread, or voice  
Anticipate the welcome of her own,  
Reclin'd the bride, soft Evelene. The step  
Up from the pillowing hand her flushing cheek  
Waken'd, or ere the threshold he o'erpast, 250  
The form yet indistinct to her quick sight,  
Murmur'd her fond upbraiding. "Truant Lord,  
Art thou too chang'd, thou too of midnight feast  
Enamour'd? time hath been the rosy cup,  
Thou Saxon in thy revels, had look'd pale 255  
To Evelene's cheek."—'Tis wretched solace, yet

'Tis solace in the drear extreme of grief,  
To find one human heart whose deeper woe  
Makes weakness of our wailing. Though alone  
Of the fray's dizzy tumult lay distinct 260  
Elidure's image on the Wanderer's soul,  
His image as beneath the Saxon steel  
Dying, he struggled back to life from joy  
His stern friend to behold with fiery brand  
Piercing his path of flight, less bitter seem'd 265  
His cup of woe, when from him sprang that bride,  
Nor knew him; knew him but no Elidure.  
Then sued for tidings, and with all her soul  
Listen'd, but could not hear, mistrusting all  
While yet but fearing, but when all assur'd, 270  
Mistrusting even her fears, even then to hope  
Clinging with desperate energy of soul.  
Her Samor left in that dead night of mind,  
When madness were a comfort, all wild whirl,  
All dizzy hurry of rack'd sense were rich 275  
Were rapturous to that blank and dismal void,  
When one incessant miserable thought  
Blends with the life, the being of the spirit.

Him scared no Saxon clarion, the drear blast

Winding of fleet pursuit; came o'er his soul 280

His own, his wedded Emeric, her babes

Hushing, while greedily with ear and soul

She drinks each sound the busy babbling fame

Spreads on the wandering winds; the fleetest steed

Of Elidure bestriding, still he moves 285

A tardy laggard to his soul's desire.

Sedulous each throng'd haunt of man avoids

His jealous speed, and still from town and tower

Came blithely forth the jubilant hymns of peace;

Still unextinguish'd their glad brilliance, wan'd 290

In morn's gray mists the yellow festal fires.

Day pass'd, day sank, 'tis now the dewy eve,

Beneath him, in the soft and silent light,

Spread the fair Valleys, mead and flowery lawn

With their calm verdure interspers'd allay 295

The forest's ponderous blackness, or retire

Under the chequering umbrage of dim groves,

Whose shadows almost slumber: far beyond

Huge mountains, brightening in their secret glens,

'Their cold peaks bathe in the rich setting sun. 300

Sweeps through the midst broad Severn, deep and dark

His monarchy of waters, its full flow  
Still widening, as he scorn'd to bear the main  
Less tribute than a sea; or inland roll'd  
Ambitious ocean, of his tide to claim 305  
The wealthy vassalage. High on its marge  
Shone the Bright City, in her Roman pomp,  
Of bath, and theatre, and basilic,  
Smooth swelling dome, and spiring obelisk,  
Glittering like those more soft and sunny towns 310  
That bask beneath the azure southern skies  
In marble majesty. Silent she stands  
In the rich quiet of the golden light.  
The banner on her walls its cumbrous folds  
Droops motionless. But Samor turn'd aloof, 315  
Where lordly his fair dwelling's long arcade  
On its white shafts the tremulous glittering light  
Cherish'd, and starry with the river dew  
Its mantle of gay flowers, the odorous lawn  
Down sloped, as in the limpid stream to bathe. 320

No watch-dog, with glad bark and fawning joy,  
His Lord saluted. Samor mark'd it not.  
No menial caught the slack rein from his hand.



He heeded not. No swift familiar step  
Forth started at his coming ; face of joy 325  
Brightened not—vacant all ; yet heeds he not.  
No infants, in their giddy, tottering speed,  
Clung round his knees. So early at their rest,  
Thought the fond father. Emeric's chamber door  
Stands open ; he but paused his name to hear 330  
Low mingled with her murmur'd orisons :  
All hush'd as in a tomb ; perchance she sleeps,  
At his long absence heartsick. He the folds  
Gently withdrawing of his nuptial bed,  
As with the amorous violence of his lips 335  
To wake her to delicious fear, bends down.  
Cold, cold as marble, the forsaken bed  
Received the fervent pressure. Back he sprung,  
And strange, like one that moveth in his sleep,  
Stood with loose arms and leaden listless gaze. 340  
Unconscious, to the city walls, far seen  
From that high chamber, rove his eyes : behold  
Against the Sun's last light a wandering breeze  
Swells up the heavy banner ; in the gleam  
The White Horse of the Saxon shakes his mane. 345

Then felt he the blank silence, then perceiv'd  
The tumult, and rude disarray that marr'd  
The face of his fair dwelling. Forth he rush'd,  
As eager that his soul at one wild draught  
Might glut itself with perfect woe, all ill 350  
Exhausted, laugh drain'd destiny to scorn.  
Cradle and infants couch with frantic hand  
Hurrying he explores, the sad chill void  
Almost delights. Now on the river brink  
He watches yon huge forms that pace the walls, 355  
Saxon their long black lances, Saxon helms  
Nod o'er their lofty brows terrific gloom.

Lo ! at his feet, beneath a primrose bed,  
Half veil'd, and branching alder that o'er-droop'd  
Its dark green canopy, a slumbering child— 360  
If slumber might be call'd, that but o'erspread  
A wan disquiet o'er the wither'd cheek,  
Chok'd the thin breath that through the pallid lip  
Scarce struggled, clos'd not the soft sunken eye.  
Well Samor knew her, of his love first pledge, 365  
First, playfullest, and gentlest : he but late  
Luxurious in the fulness of his woe,

Clings to this 'lorn hope like a drowning man,  
Not yet, not yet in this rude world alone.  
Lavish of fond officious zeal, he bathes 370  
With water from the stream her marble brow,  
Chafes her ; and with his own warm breath recalls  
The wandering life, that like a waning lamp  
Glimmer'd anon, then faded : but when slow  
Unfix'd her cold unmeaning eye regain'd 375  
Brief consciousness, powerless her languid arm  
Down fell again, half lifted in his hair  
To wreath as it was wont, with effort faint  
Strove her hard features for a woeful smile :  
And the vague murmurs of her lips 'gan fall 380  
Intelligible to his ear alone.  
“ And thou art come—too late—yet thou art come,”—  
He soothing her with hope, he knew most false,  
Slow modell'd from her broken faltering voice  
One sad continuous story.—“ 'Twas at eve 385  
We went to rest, I never slept so soft ;  
Our mother lull'd us with assurance sweet  
Of thy returning.—By and by I woke,  
But the bright morning was not shining fair,

Nor the birds singing as they us'd. I saw, 390  
By a dim dusky light, huge iron men  
With hair like fire, and their fierce voices spake  
Strange language : of my prayers I thought, and strove  
My eyes to close, still those grim-visag'd men  
Stood in the wavering darkness by the light 395  
Of their blue weapons—then they went away.  
I crept out to my mother's couch ; she lay  
Asleep, but not as I have seen her sleep,  
When I have stol'n at morn to look on her,  
And thou hast laid me by her quiet side. 400  
She shiver'd in her sleeping, and her skin  
Was chilly to the touch, yet, oh to sleep,  
Even as she did, I long'd ; for they came back,  
Those shapes in all their darkness, all their light,  
Before their rugged faces I felt cold 405  
As in the snow time ; my eyes could not see,  
Oh, but I heard a dizzy sound, like shrieks  
Of many voices all at once. I thought  
Rude hands were busy on my mother's couch,  
As though to bear her thence—yet woke she not. 410  
Oh Father, I have never look'd on death,



But she was dead, I felt that she was dead.

I could not breathe, yet from my thirsty throat

My voice was bursting, but down o'er me fell

The foldings of the couch—long, long it seem'd, 415

Ere from that cumbrous weight I struggled forth,

Then all was silent, all except the dash

Of distant oars ; I cried aloud, and heard

But my own voice, I search'd, yet found I none ;

Not one in all these wide and lofty halls, 420

My mother, my sweet brothers gone, all gone.

Almost I wish'd those fierce men might return

To bear me too in their dread arms away.

Hither I wander'd, for the river's sound

Was joyous to the silence that came cold 425

Over my bosom, since the Sun hath shone,

Yet it seem'd dark—but oh, 'tis darker now,

Darker, my Father, all within cold, cold.

The soft warmth of thy lips no more can reach

This shuddering in my breast—yet kiss me still."— 430

Vain, all in vain, that languid neck no more

Rises to meet his fondness, that pale hand

Drops from his shoulder, that wooed voice hath spent

Its last of sweetness : wanted this alone  
That could enhance his agony, baffled hope. 435  
Quiet and cool the deep tide at his feet  
Rolls with a tranquil murmur ; one lone gleam  
Still lingering from the sunken Sun, beneath  
The moving surface, lightens its cold depth.  
How pleasant in its secret caves to quench 440  
The soul, the body's fever ; to cast off  
This restless, trembling consciousness, that clings  
Enamour'd to its anguish, sedulous  
To nurse its own disquiet : not to feel,  
Though cast by wandering waves on Emeric's grave ;  
Though Saxon barks triumphant bound above, 445  
To feel not, and have freedom though in death.  
For why this barren wilderness of earth  
Still haunt, man's pity, and the arch fiend's scoff ;  
Why to the wearying wretchedness of life 450  
Cling with a coward fondness ?—but a step  
To quiet—to forgetfulness, a step.

But alien to proud Samor those bad thoughts  
Startled his nature, burnt his soul with shame,  
That such unholy musings dare intrude 455

On its sad sanctity ; upright he sprung ;  
Oh, not in vain a Christian, with clench'd hand  
And inward rack convulsive of chok'd pain,  
Forc'd calmness to his brow : his hollow voice  
Wrought to a mournful fortitude.—“ Oh thou, 460  
Glorious in thy prosperity of crime,  
Hengist, and thou that barter'st thy old fame  
For sweet lascivious chambering, hast unking'd  
Thy stately soul within the wreathing arms  
Of that fair Saxon, in loose dalliance soft 465  
To steep the inebriate sense, on Samor's state  
Look, and be pale with envy ; he dare stand  
Lofty beneath yon starry throne of God,  
And bless him, that his fate is scant and poor  
In joys like your's, by all your pomp, your bliss, 470  
Made lovesick of his misery ; still he feels  
The haughty solace of disdain ; still soothes  
The madness of his grief by pitying you.  
Nor yet, oh impotent of cruelty,  
I am not utterly from this dark world 475  
Estrang'd and outcast : gone, for ever gone,  
Those exquisite mild luxuries of the heart,

That summer sunshine of the soul, sweet love,  
That makes life what we deem of heaven ; remain  
Hardier delights, severer joys. Oh reft 480  
Of all thy brave, thy princely, of my faith,  
Thou hast a deeper need—be thou my bride,  
Oh Britain, to thy wreck I proudly wed  
The sadness of my widowhood, and bid  
Pale bridemaids to our nuptials, holy Wrath 485  
And iron-handed Vengeance ; and invoke  
Death, that dark minstrel from fast-slaughter'd mounds  
Of Saxons, to awake our bridal hymn,  
And spread for torchlight on our spousal eve  
Wild gratulation of their funeral fires. 490

“ And thou, oh stainless denizen of heaven,  
Soft soul of my lost Emeric, endure  
Though jealous my new bride from thee bereave  
The rude tumultuous day, the midnight hour  
I consecrate to thee ; then slide thou down, 495  
Like moonlight on the darkness' raven wing,  
And oh, if human passion, human love,  
Stain the pure essence of immortal spirits,  
Leave heaven in heaven, earth's frailer loveliness



Resuming, chaste mild fondness, timorous warmth 500  
Visit my desert fancy. Him by day,  
Savage and merciless, with soul of steel,  
And pale brow cloudy with a nation's cares,  
Shall midnight find an amorous dreamer fond,  
A dotard on a dim unreal shade." 505

Now o'er what was the rosy, playful, warm,  
Now pale, now changeless, icy cold, the maid  
Whose blue eyes danc'd with rapture, whose light step  
Was consort to the air-roving winds (half seal'd  
That lustreless wan azure ; stiff and damp 510  
Those sprightly limbs) oft pausing as yet loath  
To part from what he shudder'd to behold,  
Heaps Samor the light earth ; ere o'er her face  
He plac'd the primrose knot, once stoop'd his lips,  
And started to find cold what he knew dead. 515

Now closed that mournful office, nearing fast  
Is heard a dash of oars, and at his side  
Forth leap'd an armed Saxon, with rais'd arm  
Menacing ; but Samor down with scornful strength  
The grim intruder dash'd to earth, and fix'd 520  
His stern heel on his neck, and stood in act

The life to trample from the gasping trunk;  
 Sudden withdrawn his angry tread, he spake,  
 "Thee first of Saxon race, thee last, this arm  
 Spares, not of milky mercy, but as meet  
 To minister my purpose; go unscath'd,  
 And tell to Hengist, tell thy Lord, who robs  
 The Lion's den, should chain the Lion first;  
 Add, Samor is abroad,"—Then to the boat  
 He sprang, and pass'd to Severn's western shore. 530

## BOOK VI.

A VOICE, o'er all the waste and prostrate isle  
Wandereth a valiant voice; the hill, the dale,  
Forest and mountain, heath and ocean shore  
Treasure its mystic murmurs; all the winds  
From the bleak moody East to that soft gale  
That wantons with the summer's dewy flowers,  
Familiar its dark burthen waft abroad.  
Is it an utterance of the earth? a sound  
From the green barrows of the ancient dead?  
Doth fierce Cassivelan's cold sleep disdain  
That less than Cæsar with a master's step  
Walk his free Britain? Doth thy restless grave,  
Bonduca, to the slavish air burst ope,  
And thou, amid the laggard cars of war,

Cry, "Harness and away !" But far and wide, 15  
As when from marish dank, or quaking fen,  
Venomous and vast the clouds uproll, and spread  
Pale pestilence along the withering land,  
So sweeps o'er all the isle his wasting bands  
The conqueror Saxon ; he, far worse, far worse 20  
His drear contagion, that the body's strength  
Wastes, and with feverish pallor overlays  
The heaven-shap'd features ; this the nobler soul,  
With slavery's base sickness attaints,  
Making man's life more hideous than his death. 25  
Thames rolls a Saxon tide ; in vain delays  
Deep Severn on Plinlimmon's summits rude  
His narrow freedom, tame anon endures  
Saxon dominion : high with arms uplift,  
As he had march'd o'er necks of prostrate kings, 30  
Caswallon on the southern shore of Trent  
Drives onward, he nought deeming won, while aught  
Remains unwon. But still that wonderous voice,  
Like vulture in the grisly wake of war,  
Hovers, and flings on air his descant strange, 35  
'Vengeance and Vigilance !'—in van, in rear,



Around, above, beneath, the clouds of Heaven  
Enshroud it in their misty folds; earth speaks  
From all her caves, "Vengeance and Vigilance!"  
Aye, at that sound the Briton crest assumes 40  
High courage and heroic shame, he wears  
With such bold mien his slavery, he might seem  
Lord over fortune, and with calm disdain  
He locks his fetters, like proud battle arms.  
Without a foe o'er this wide land of foes 45  
Marcheth the Saxon. City, tower, and fort  
On their harsh hinge roll back their summon'd gates,  
With such a sullen and reluctant jar,  
Submission seems defiance. Though to fear  
Impassive, scarce the Victor dare unfurl 50  
Banner of conquest on the jealous air.  
Less perilous were frantic strife, were wrath  
Desperate of life, and blind to death, wild hate  
Of being struck all heedless so it strike,  
Than this high haughty misery, that fierce woe 55  
Baffles by brave endurance, and confronts  
With cold and stern contentedness all ill,  
Outrage, and insult, ravage, rape, and wreck,

That dog barbaric Conquerors march of war.

'Tis like the sultry silence, ushering forth 60

The thunder's cloudy chariot, rather like

The murky smothering of volcanic fire

Within its rocky prison; forth anon

Bursts the red captive, to the lurid heaven

Upleaps, and with its surging dome of smoke 65

Shuts from the pale world the meridian Sun.

But in their camp, in fierce divan and full,

The lordly robbers sate, assemblage proud,

Ethling, and Erle, and King, for council met,

For council and carousal;\* so they deem'd 70

The drunken sense would hardier daring grasp,

And the bold revel of the blood, the soul

Flush to more noble valiance, strong desire

In fierce embrace to meet that mistress dark,

Danger: Hoarse din of merriment, the air 75

Smote with meet music blending loud and deep.

But Horsa lighting with disdainful mirth

\* De pace denique ac bello plerumque in convivii consultant; tanquam nullo magis tempore aut ad simplices cogitationes pateat animus, aut ad magnas incalescat. Tac. Germ.

His broad bright eye, 'gan scoff with rugged jest.

“ Ill have we done, though for one sumptuous feast

Be our's this spacious isle, ill have we done ;— 80

That in our prodigal and heedless waste

Of those tall high-born Britons spared we none

To tilt at with our thirsty spears, and scare

The frost and slumber from our sluggish hearts.

Now hang we forth our banners to disport 85

In the smooth breeze, our armours steeled clasps

To summons soft of Lady's tender hands

Surrender ; or go joust the hardy oaks

For pastime. Oh, along these velvet plains

To prance 'mid timorous hinds with their pale souls 90

In their white faces, heralds crouching low,

With looks beseeching, voices meek, clasp'd hands ;

'Tis tame and wearisome as at dead noon

To rock upon the flat and hazy sea.”

“ This too,” cried hoary Cerdic ; “ this bright sword

Loathes its long Christian fast, yet not despairs 96

Erewhile to glut with banquet rich and full

Its ravening blade ; for trust me, fiery Erle,

Many a fierce steed hath brook'd the brazen curb,

That chaf'd anon, from his high seat to dust 100  
Hath shaken his pale rider ; Erle, I read  
In yon bow'd foreheads sterner characters  
Than abject, tame allegiance, homage base :  
There the firm purpose, meditation deep,  
And study of revenge ; the wand of peace 105  
Is in their hands, but in their souls they grasp  
The battle-axe and spear."—A bitter laugh  
Came with the fierce reply, " Shall Horsa watch  
The shiftings in the visage of a slave ;  
I issue forth my mandate, and 'tis done,  
Whether with cloudy or with sunshine brow  
I know not and regard not."—Cerdic's voice,  
Ruffled to somewhat of prophetic tone :

" Not, Horsa, to the stones, the deaf dull stones,  
Nor the cold current of the senseless winds 115  
Speaks that wild orator, the Man, whose paths  
Are hidden as the ways of fate, unknown  
Who knoweth all, who seeth all unseen,  
Nor like the lightning shaft his presence dread  
Divulgeth, but to shatter, but to slay. 120  
Whose breath beneath the soft dove's snowy down



A soul might breathe of valour to outsoar  
The falcon's pitch of pride: I tell thee, Erle,  
This soft effeminate Britain, to our sway  
Gentle and pliant as a willow wand, 125  
Will that dark Man uprear a ponderous Mace,  
To crush our infant empire."—"Man! hath man,  
Curdled the blood of Offa, made his soul  
Patient of that pale trembling motion, fear,  
And Offa live, live shameless of his shame, 130  
Amid his peers with unblench'd front to say,  
These knees have quail'd, these stubborn joints have felt  
The aspin's coward fluttering, and the Sun  
That saw his flight, hath seen not his revenge.  
Cerdic, the name of perishable man 135  
Thou dost belie, so titling beings dim;  
Viewless and formless denizens of air,  
That sport and dally with the human shape,  
Making of mortals to their mortal peers,  
Dark things of doubt and danger. We had sworn, 140  
Gurmund and Sigvart, Ælla, Attilar,  
And other six, than whom no German arm  
Sways heavier the long lance, nor German foot

Treads firmer battle's crimson paths, I speak,  
Fiery-soul'd Horsa, to thy front ; to thine, 145  
High-sceptred Hengist ! mortal steel we swore  
Should choke that full-voic'd Wanderer's clamorous  
breath.

Sage oath ! as to adjure our souls, and vow  
Th' irregular mad ocean our word " Peace"  
Should hearken, and sleek smooth his cresting waves.  
But gaily went we forth with brand and bow, 151  
Like hunters to the chase, scoffing our prey.  
' Now if he meet us in his mortal shape,  
Let him melt back into his native air ;  
' Then shall he 'scape'—high o'er our path a rock 155  
Hung beetling, from its summit came a voice,  
' Behold him !'—with the voice a fragment vast,  
An earthquake had been weak to hurl it forth ;  
Two stately necks to the low earth sank down,  
And o'er them that huge mass lay stern and still, 160  
Like an old giant's monument. But we  
Leap'd onward, Ælla met the dark unknown,  
Heavy with ruin hung his arm in air,  
But in his valiant heart a javelin stood,

Drinking the crimson life. Still on we swept, 165  
Many a wild league o'er moor and marish swamp,  
Forest and wold, and still our pathway lay  
O'er the warm corpses of our foremost peers.  
Sole, sad survivors of our host, we came,  
Sigvart and Offa; on the giddy brink 170  
Of precipice abrupt the Conqueror paus'd,  
As weary with his prowess, our defeat,  
To mock us with the calmness of his rest.  
“Now come what will,” cried Sigvart, “come what may,  
Or thou, or I, or both.”—Then on he sprung, 175  
Yet not the more relax'd that shape of gloom  
Its stern contemptuous quiet, wav'd his arm  
With motion less of strife than proud command,  
And then of Sigvart's fall the deep abyss  
Sent up a hollow sound. I fled, proud Peers, 180  
I say again, I fled, and, or disdain'd  
That being dark a lone and single foe:  
Or by the shielding of our mightier Gods  
I 'scap'd—“I too (cried Hermingard), I too  
Of that mysterious Wanderer have known 185  
The might and savage mercy. I had stray'd

Into a fabric fair, of Christian Gods,  
A fane it seem'd, rich-crested pillars rang'd  
On either side, above the hollow roof  
Aye lessening, seem'd to melt into the air 190  
On which it floated.—High uprear'd there shone  
An altar, bright with chalice, lamp, and cup  
All of the flaming gold. I rush'd to seize,  
An arm was on my neck, that dash'd me down  
Like a soft infant; then a vengeful voice 195  
Struck on my dizzy hearing.—“But thy blood  
Would dye this holy pavement with foul stain,  
Heathen, thy soul and mortal shape were rent  
Asunder.”—As I fled, I turn'd—reclin'd  
Low by that altar on his knees, all quench'd 200  
Fierce wrath and fiery menace, drooping all  
Stern pride of mastery, triumph, and high scorn  
That wild Unknown, calm, not with weariness;  
Gentle, but not with sleep. Majestic light  
Beam'd on the quiet of his heavenward brow, 205  
Yet human tears stood glittering in his eyes.  
My thoughts were vengeance, but the cold clear air  
Went creeping up my veins, an awful frost



Drank up the languid current of my blood,  
And unrevenged I fled that tranquil Man." 210

Upsprang young Abisa, and beauteous scorn  
Curl'd his smooth cheek—"in tumult or in calm;  
But have he blood within his beating veins,  
Mine is a steel of such a searching thirst,  
'Twill drain its crimson source." "Thou! wanton Boy,"  
The pale laugh wrinkling on his swelling lip. 216

"Thou! thou! (cried Offa) with thy mother's milk,  
Yet white within thy beardless cheek."—"Proud Jute,  
The stem of Woden is a mounting tree,  
Its saplings soar to meet the golden Sun,  
While tamer shrubs creep with base trail on earth.  
Hengist, my King, my Brother! by our Sire  
I swear, that ne'er again metheglin cup  
Shall sparkle on these lips, till I have met  
This mystic deity of Offa's fear." 225

Then on the Monarch turn'd all eyes; he sat  
In darkness, or by chance, or art the lamps  
Stream'd bright and yellow down the festal board,  
But fell no ray within his folded robe.  
Yet wore not Hengist on his brow his soul, 230

High spake he from its cold and stately calm,  
Law to the lawless, to the dauntless dread;  
But his were rarer qualities of power,  
Dominion o'er himself; deep, deep within  
Dwelt all the stormy passions; by no eye'd 235  
Pierc'd in its dark abiding lay the spirit  
With all its shames and grandeurs, loves and hates,  
And all its greedy family of lusts.  
Though now there seem'd beneath his royal crown  
A faint uncertain paleness, as of fear 240  
Not wholly quell'd, and on his cheek and lip  
Hovered a quivering motion, ere he spake,  
But cool his speech.—“ Presumptuous youth, thy oath  
Though wild, is holy—Woden guard thee well.  
Yet art thou sole in madness? time hath been 245  
When the brave phrenzy of rash daring spread  
A broad contagious flame through all our camp,  
Till not a sword but sham'd its sluggish sheath.  
Needed not Saxon king, as now, to gild  
Fair danger ere it pleas'd, as now proclaim 250  
Rich guerdon to the warrior, that aspires  
To rival Woden's blood, and be the peer

Of Abisa in peril and renown.  
More lofty duties fetter thee and me,  
High Horsa"—(for the fiery warrior's hand  
Had started to his sword's familiar hilt)  
Rob we not of their fame the valiant Erles."

No seat was vacant, not a voice came forth,  
As he were single in his shame sate each,  
Nor dared on his compeers to look, in fear  
Soul might be there more dauntless than his own.  
Blank silence all! but loud that silence spake  
Not vainly, Samor, worn thy title proud,  
Avenger! by thy country's Conquerors thou  
Magnificently deified; so soar'd  
Thy mortal virtue o'er their tamer Gods.  
Not that the vassal elements thy sway  
Hearken'd, nor beings of the middle air  
Stoop'd on their glistening wings to work thy will;  
Avenger! but for thee, the Almighty wrought  
Most marv'lous, most mirac'lous; in thy soul,  
That nobler field, high wonders manifold  
Labour'd to light and lustre: for what thought  
Unwing'd by inbreath'd Godhead e'er might dream

Of glory to be born from this broad night 275  
Of desolation and deep darkness, strive  
For faint, impalpable, and airy good,  
Through the thick clouds of evil and of woe,  
Strong, stately, constant, like an eagle set  
To drink the last light of the parting sun ? 280  
What heart of earthly clay, that ne'er imbib'd  
Holier and purer ether, might endure  
Danger, dismay, despair, all ills, that wring  
Within, and rack and rankle ? not alone  
Fierce wrong and insult of triumphant foe, 285  
But worse, far worse, from those our friends misdeem'd,  
Pity of calm, cold cowards, or rude scorn  
From sleek and smiling slaves ; or scoff and mock  
At our hard sufferings from those ingrate hearts  
For whom we suffer ; these the woes that wait 290  
That nobly desperate, who with stedfast hand  
The statue of his country's fame, down dash'd  
And trampled by barbarian feet, ingrain'd  
With the coarse dust and black, before the world  
Would rear again to sov'reignty and state. 295  
But thou didst strive and suffer, thou didst hope,



And therefore in thy dark and silent deeds  
Beam'd manifest God's Spirit ; till in thee  
Even the base body that e'er clogs and clouds  
The nobler energies, its state infirm 300  
Shook off, and by communion close assum'd  
The soul's immortal essence, or the soul  
A climate and peculiar atmosphere  
Spread round its weaker instrument of power.  
Hence human accidents of heat and cold, 305  
Famine and thirst, wasting and weariness,  
Fell light and thin upon thy tranquil frame,  
Like flakes of snow upon th' unbroken lake ;  
Thus didst thou pass most fearless, and most fear'd ; 310  
By virtue, and thy foeman's dread, array'd  
In attributes of strong divinity ;  
Danger became thy safety, thy renown  
Grew from thy utter desperate wretchedness.

But now the more enjoy'd that Saxon youth  
His solitude of glory ; forth he springs 315  
Hasty, lest valorous repentance fire  
Some rival Erle of half his peril yet  
To wrong him. In his tent, soft languid sounds

Expiring on her falling lute, arose  
To welcome home her Lord his beauteous slave ; 320  
His slave ! is that her slavery, round his neck  
The snowy girdle of her arms to wreathe ?  
To catch a master's mandate doth she raise  
The bashful fringes of her eyes, and meet  
Those glances of no lordly scorn, that soothe 325  
Her gentle wayward angriness of love,  
Soothe, dare not chide, that coldness faint and brief  
That would be wooed, but sweeter to be won ?  
Nor dares not she withhold that arm uprais'd  
From their high stand the furniture of fight, 330  
Glaive, corslet, morion to displace ; her touch  
Now clings with soft resistance, playful now  
Thwarts his stern purpose.—“ Oh, remove not them ;  
In hours of absence, thou too dearly lov'st,  
They are my comfort, my companions they, 335  
My all but thou : the dusky shades of eve  
Brown o'er their glittering steal, and there array,  
A bright and armed man, th' officious air  
Gives motion, and with all thy graceful pride  
Shakes the light plumage, thou art there, in spite 340

Of thy own tardy lingering, thou art there.  
Oh, I have woke at midnight, when my soul  
With thee hath been a wanderer through sad fields,  
'Mid death and battle, though my lightest touch  
Had prov'd thee by my side, yet my faint hand 345  
Lack'd courage with that dangerous proof to front  
My unsubstantial fears. Oh then, if light  
Of star or moon on their blue surface gleam'd,  
Or wind awoke them into sound, again  
Calm on my pillow droop'd my cheek to rest, 350  
Secure to find thee sweetly slumbering there.  
Yet, yet unwon, oh, lighten that cold brow,  
And I will sing the soft and sleepy song  
That makes a woman of thy angry eyes,  
Lulls the rude tumult in thy troubled breast, 355  
Leaving nought there but melody and me."

Then started she to feel how hard and cold  
Between her and her bosom's resting place  
The corslet lay, by stealth her fond embrace  
Supplanting ; gently his one arm declin'd 360  
Over her neck, in careless fondness hangs,  
Busy the other, its rude office frames,

Linking the breastplate's clasps ; now holds he back  
From her approaching lips his cheek, to fix  
The weighty morion ; but her garrulous grief 365  
Paus'd not—" At midnight ! now ! oh brave misdeem'd,  
Misdeem'd, who only th' open day would front  
With his bold armour ; who but I would love,  
I, weak and brainsick, one whose valour shrouds  
Its prowess in the cloudy gloom of night ? 370  
Oh not, oh not to war, thou goest to win  
Some lovelier or some newer bride. Go, go,  
Though faithless, barbarous, cruel, cold to me,  
Yet make not her too wretched, make not her  
Heartsick with sad expectance."—But her arms 375  
Belied her desperate language, closer clasp'd  
With more than maiden strength. " Oh, stony heart,  
And I for thee forsook my infant home,  
Where all my steps were music, all my smiles  
Glad sunshine to my parents wintry blood, 380  
That glanc'd like summer waters at my sight :  
For thee did violence to my virgin fame :  
By war's rude force might I have seem'd enthral'd,  
A luckless, pitied damsel ; my fond heart



Ill brook'd the coarse reproach of ravisher 385  
Should couple with a name so dear as thine.  
At night-fall fled I to thee ; even as now  
The stars shone beauteous, and a kindly gloom  
Curtain'd our meeting even as now ; no change,  
From soft and fond and gentle, but in thee."— 390  
“ Peace, trembler, peace ! to-morrow's dawn shall hail,  
Borne in the shield of honour, on the necks  
Of his tall peers, thy Abisa ; no voice  
Silent, no quiet in the troubled air,  
Restless with his hymn'd triumph, Offa's heart 395  
Sick with wan envy. Then Myfanwy, then  
My glory shall make rapture of thy tears,  
And thou shalt bless the grief that wrings thee now.”  
“ Oh, glory hath a stern and savage mate,  
Danger, her lawless paramour, enfolds 400  
Her beauties in his churlish arms. Oh pause,  
And yet farewell, 'tis exquisite to part,  
For oh, thou weep'st at parting, 'twas past hope  
To see a tear on that stern face for me.”—

She hath her last cold kiss through the barr'd helm  
Won hardly ; she is calm as though it dwelt 406

Yet on her lips, she hears his parting steps,  
Yet lingers on her cheek that liquid glow,  
That brilliant harmony of smile and tear  
That at the presence of the one belov'd 410  
Flits o'er the settled purple of the cheek.  
Oh, if soft woman hath her wilder fears,  
She hath her wilder hopes, for man's stern grasp  
Too thin, too airy! "Never yet found false,  
Thou wilt return;" (so wanton'd her gay dreams) 415  
"So young, so lovely, fate would shame to snatch  
So early the choice glories of the earth."—  
Then sate she down triumphal coronets  
To weave, but not in modest quiet grief,  
And gentle resignation pale and mild, 420  
But with a dancing heart and bright blithe eye;  
And when her eyelids droop'd, soft o'er her came  
A sweet inconstant slumber, such as sleep  
Love-dreaming maidens ere their bridal morn.  
But through the clear calm night, the azure plain  
Of heaven, with all its glittering paths of light 426  
Distinct and dazzling, mov'd that fair-hair'd youth;  
So, if old fable may be won to smile

Its grace upon our darker tale, the boy,  
Smooth-cheek'd Endymion, his enamour'd Moon 430  
Woo'd with no lawless witchcraft from her sphere :  
Nor she delay'd, her silver-sandal'd feet  
Gliding and glancing o'er the dews she came,  
And curtain'd in a cloud of snowy light,  
Mock'd mortal harps that hymn'd her cold and chaste.  
No amorous fancies o'er thy downless cheek 436  
Flushing their rosy heat, no love-lipp'd tones  
In sweet disturbance stealing on the air,  
Young Abisa ! with more imperious charm  
Thou summon'st from wild wood or cavern'd heath, 440  
Nor vainly, their fierce habitant. Behold,  
A shadow by thine own, its stately length  
On the white dews advancing ; at thy side  
The Avenger, as upsprung from nether earth.

Then fatal gladness leap'd in that young heart, 445  
He flung his vizor'd helmet proudly up,  
And dash'd defiance 'gainst fierce Offa's dread.

But Samor, for when his pure heart was wean'd  
From all the faint and feeble of his kind,  
The mercies clung within, and gentleness 450

So mingled with his nature, that it slaked  
Even the blood-thirsting phrenzy of revenge ;  
Samor that beauteous youth survey'd, the stars  
Glimmer'd a blue and hazy light, that shewed  
His soft locks spreading their bright clusters wide, 455  
His vermeil cheek most lovely in its wrath,  
And brow that seem'd to wonder and delight  
At its own dauntlessness. So tall, so fair ;  
Oft had he imag'd his own perish'd boy  
In flower of youth, that flower which never bloom'd. 460  
Tender and mild his voice, as though he spake  
Even to that dead belov'd—" Oh, brave and fair,  
Why thus abroad amid the silent night,  
With menace and fierce gesture wild and strange?"  
" Thou heardest my call, thou seest my arms, my aim 465  
Idly thou question'st."—" 'Tis not, gentle youth,  
Thy golden luxury of hair, nor cheek  
Warm in the rosy wantonness of youth,  
But thy brave bearing, gallant mien and proud,  
'That winds long-banish'd mercy round my sword, 470  
To save from it one Saxon life."—" Soft praise,  
And sweet from lady's lips, but not to hear



Smooth Flattery's descant come I, but to win  
What, being won, is in its lofty self  
Imperishable beauty, garlands youth! 475  
With honour passing the white hairs of age,  
Glory, the life of life."—"And is there none  
Whose pillow dreams of thee are haunting now?  
No mother, whose last waking thought was hope,  
At morn, to meet thee in thy wonted glow 480  
Of loveliness and life? No gentle maid  
Whom the bare thought of paleness in thy cheek,  
Of death's wan chill upon thy brow, would waste  
And wither like the canker'd flower of spring?  
Return to her, oh fair, high-minded youth! 485  
Ere yet too late, return."—But more delay.  
The hot youth brook'd not; down he clasp'd his helm,  
And leaping to the frantic onset, cried,  
"Now, Offa, for thy shame, and for thy meed,  
My brother Hengist!"—As when lightning flame 490  
Dashes at midnight o'er his slumbering lids,  
Up starts the wild steed, all his tawny mane  
Bristling and blazing, he devours the earth  
In fury; even so sudden those rash words

Set flames upon the Avenger's brow, set wrath 495  
On the impetuous motion of his spear.

Oh, holy Night ! in thy injurious gloom  
How blank the proud distinctions of man's fame !  
Languor and loftiness, and shame and pride  
In one dead darkness, deep forgetfulness, 500  
Lie, as within a grave, till Virtue's self,  
But for her haughty consciousness within,  
Might weary of her mute and viewless deeds.  
Secret and still ! that I might violate  
Thy mysteries, and redeem from envious gloom 505  
That Saxon boy's dead honours, dearly won,  
Most dearly, yet most nobly. Morn shall tell  
The issue of that conflict, but no morn  
Will dawn upon his silent, perish'd praise.

Two hours are past, alone the Avenger moves 510  
Under the stars of heaven ; 'tis midnight deep,  
Now comes his hour of softness ; love-sick boy,  
Tuning soft phrenzies to his wanton lute,  
Is not more wild, fantastical, or fond,  
Than Britain's stately hope, high Hengist's dread. 515  
For ever at this hour, of parted joy

Dim gleams revisit his forsaken soul,  
Like once-lov'd music o'er a maniac's ear,  
Faintly and feebly sweet, the dead put on  
Their earthly lustre, Emeric comes, as fair 520  
As from the bridal altar, but less coy,  
In fervent full abandonment of love.  
The breezes are melodious with her voice,  
The dews are printed by her slender feet,  
She flows into his arms, her fond embrace 525  
Is warm upon his soul. Thus aye she comes,  
Or when 'tis wintry in the starless skies,  
Or when the moonlight bathes the earth, to her  
Heaven opes its crystal portals, beauteous light  
Ushers her presence, sleep can ne'er estrange 530  
That luxury from his heart; when consciousness  
Of all things earthly slumbereth and is dead,  
She haunts within, her sweet intrusion clings  
To the lull'd spirit, senseless but to her,  
All, all the living of the man is her's. 535

Oh, in their dreamings, their communions wild  
With airy, immaterial visitants,  
Most differ Guilt and Virtue; there are shapes

Hideous and hateful, snaky Gorgon smiles,  
And all the fabled populace of hell, 540

Brooding disquiet o'er the thorny couch ;

But Virtue's visions are almost as fair

As angels blest realities ; to thee

Lovely thy nightly visitant, sad Chief !

As to man, sinless yet in Eden bowers, 545

On beds of odorous amaranth asleep,

Yet uncreated, came his virgin bride,

Delicate phantom ; then his fresh pure soul

Amorous enchantment first entranc'd, first rose

That our best feeling, of lost Paradise 450

That sole surviving pleasure, holy love.

Beauteous thy blue uprising, mist-rob'd Morn !

All thy bright glittering of fantastic dews

With their thin tissue silkening the green meads,

And all thy music of blithe leaves that dance 555

In the caressing breeze, and matins gay

From all the living woodland, Sleep is pleas'd

To be so sweetly banish'd her soft reign.

But dreary are thy sounds, and sad thy light

On the lewd wassail, riots orgies rude, 560

Polluting day with sights that shame dark night.



Now from the state pavilion forth are pour'd  
The synod of high banqueters, their eyes  
Hot with loose raptures and distemper'd joy,  
Voluptuously turbulent their souls. 565  
Right in their way stood fix'd a lofty spear,  
Not with gay garland crown'd, or streaming silk,  
But, with that beauteous head that yesternight  
Confronted them with graceful pride; the cheek  
Where wantonly youth's rosy banner gleam'd, 570  
Pale, dewy, stiffening, lifeless, lustreless;  
Part matted with red damp the golden locks  
Clung round the spear, part curling on the air,  
Sad semblance shew'd of life, in all the rest  
Making the stillness and fix'd cold more dread. 575

No cheek was there so bright, voluptuous heart  
So hot, but, like bleak snow, fear fell on it  
With a cold thrill and searching; if their sight  
Had yet perception, humbler chiefs might draw  
From high example comfort for their dread; 580  
Brow might they see with kingly crown beset,  
White, sad, and shrunken as their own. Alone,  
Fierce smil'd the pride of Offa; he held up

To those wan lips the sparkling shell of mead :

“ Drink, thou hast kept thy oath, drink, soft-lipp’d boy !”

O’er all the camp spread loud and wide and far 586

The name of Abisa ; Myfanwy heard

Where lay she dreaming half, and fabling half

Of garlands and of gay triumphal pomp.

How nimble are the feet that bear light hearts ! 590

She is gone forth, and all for joy forgot

The veil e’er wont to dim her dazzling cheek,

Forgot the braiding of her hair, the maid

So soft, so timorous, at the wanton breeze

She oft hath trembled, ’neath day’s eye retired 595

Even from the fondness of her own loved youth.

Through files of warriors, who uncasque their brows

To fill their curious gaze, she hurries on,

She knows not what she sees, and only knows,

She sees not what she seeks, that cheek, that eye 600

Which fed on her with such excess of love

As if ’twere worse than blindness to lose sight

Of its sole idol ; only she is blithe,

She only smiling ’mid those many sad.

She meets even all she longs for ; up from earth 605

(For now from that sad eminence of scorn  
Had friendly hand remov'd it, now had cleans'd  
Its damp defilement) that dear face on her  
Settled its fixed and inexpressive gaze.

Her mien was strangely rational, her look 610  
Like one that calmly ponder'd what it saw,  
Her voice articulate and passionless.

"Who hath done this?"—"The Avenger, the unknown,"  
Spake many voices.—"Oh, my hands are weak ;  
Ye see them soft and delicate and white, 615

But thou, and thou, and thou, art bold and strong,  
And bear'st bright armour, ye will sure requite  
The slaughter on the slaughterer's head."—Ensued

Brief moments of a stagnant grief, life paus'd,  
As 'twould prolong unconsciousness, delay 620

Yet, yet that state that wakes with waking sense.

Then kindled up her eye, but not with joy,

Then flush'd her cheek a light and sanguine red,

That its fair marble flitted o'er, but left

Nor tinge nor warmth ; she snatch'd up to her heart

That lifeless thing and fled ; as some fond bird 626

With spread wings hovering o'er her nest, looks round

At some black shape of fear, then turns to see  
If yet her callow brood are slumbering safe :  
So wandering her dim eye on all around, 630  
Anon with full intensity of love,  
Settled on her cold care. She reach'd the tent,  
There miserly her treasure she o'erbroods ;  
She lays it on her lap, and sings to it,  
Now gazes as she thought even yet those eyes 635  
Might open, those wan lips, their wonted sounds  
Murmur, now almost sees a forming smile :  
Now gaily carols on her broken songs,  
Ever his favourite, most familiar tones,  
And now breaks off, as fearful to disturb 640  
His quiet slumbers, only speaks in smiles,  
Language by him e'er understood, and once,  
Once her rash lips approach'd : so pass'd the hours  
From earliest morning till the setting sun.  
Then that wild spirit and playfulness of grief 645  
Sadden'd to drear sobriety, gave place  
Sweet-dreaming twilight to the bright clear day.  
Then first she thought of beasts and fowls obscene  
Battening on his fair limbs, no hand to heap



The scanty pity of a little earth 650  
Upon the brave, the princely, and the fair:  
Envious of partner in her sacred toil,  
Bearing her cold wan burthen in her arms,  
Alone upon the pious quest she speeds.  
She fears not, ah too wretched now to fear! 655  
Darkness is on her steps, but what to her  
Though nature's rich varieties are blank?  
Her guide the unblinded sympathies within;  
The love that link'd her to his living soul  
Will light her to him lifeless; yon wan stars, 660  
That struggle with the haze, are bright enough  
To beam upon the dead. But now more fast  
Their golden cressets multiply, more clear,  
And lo fierce Offa in her path: his eye  
Fix'd on her with a rude imperious lust, 665  
As the pollution of his bad desires  
Did honour to their victim. But the maid,  
Unbelieving, unsuspecting aught impure,  
With sweet beseeching, almost with caress,  
Would win her onward passage; when her soul 670  
Was startled into fear, she would not think,

Such savage nature dwelt in human hearts.  
 She wept, she sued, she drew the veil away,  
 Upheld that lovely lifeless thing—in vain:  
 The snowy dove is in the rude kite's grasp,  
 Pale, fluttering, fainting; upon Heaven she call'd,  
 Cruelly calm look'd on her the cool skies;  
 She call'd on Abisa, but only felt  
 More deeply that cold glassiness of face,  
 That dull, indifferent witness of her shame;  
 But in the stress and hurry of despair  
 Strange energies were hers, with frantic voice  
 She call'd on the Avenger—Lo, he comes,  
 Terrible in the silence of his arms,  
 And earth is dank with Offa's lustful blood.  
 But her first motion was a frantic kiss  
 On Abisa's cold lips, as though for him  
 Proud of the untainted treasure of her love;  
 Then turn'd to her preserver, but with looks  
 Of loathing more than thankfulness; he stood  
 In gentle majesty serene, yet proud  
 Of that light victory, of prevented crime  
 Severely joyful; bitter strife of heart

Spake in her language—" Had it been but death,  
I yet had curs'd thee ! oh, look here, look here ! 695

(And she withdrew the clust'ring curls that veil'd  
The rigid deathfulness of that fair brow)

Oh, one sole feeling to this dead heart seem'd  
A duty and delight, the hate of thee.

Cruel, even that thou enviest me, even that."— 700

" That, British maiden ! is a Saxon's face,  
Yet mourns thy amorous heart in guilty tears ?"

" Is there not beauty in a Saxon's cheek,  
Is there not music on a Saxon's tongue,

Is there not tenderness in Saxon hearts ? 705

Oh, he is kind and true, his love to me

Almost as deep and fond, as mine to him,

Wild that I am, he was, that fatal was

Makes agony my sacred thought of him.—"

" Maiden, by Wye's transparent stream abode 710

An aged pair, and their declining day

One beauteous child enlighten'd, and dispens'd

Soft moonlight o'er their darkening eve ; they thought

The only pang of death from her to part.

But heavy was their sinking to the grave, 715

For that fair beam in unchaste darkness quench'd  
Its virgin lustre, and its light withdrew,  
Of their old limbs the life: alone they dwelt,  
In discontent and cold distate of all,  
As her ingratitude had made them sick  
Of the world's hollowness, and if she fail'd  
All earthly things must needs be false and frail.  
They ne'er reproach'd her, for so near the grave  
They could not hate; but for her sake they loath'd  
Each old familiar face, that once they lov'd.  
Where she was wont to wander, wander'd they;  
The garden flowers she tended, they bound up  
With woeful care; their chill and shaking hands  
Made tremulous music with her lute, I shrunk  
In hoary age to see such childish joys.  
They felt one after pleasure, the same hour  
They glided from their woes, their parting breath,  
Blended in languid blessings on her head,  
For her went suppliant to the throne of God,  
Their lost Myfanwy."—Trembling stood she there,  
Like one that strives to weep, but the hard tears  
Are frozen in their source. "Oh thou and I,



Sweet Abisa (to that cold head she spake),  
We will go weep upon their graves, and win  
Their spirits to forgiveness ; when they hear 740  
How fervent and how fatal were our loves,  
Heaven will lend airs to waft their mercy down.”  
“ Fond Maid, beware ! repentance must be chaste  
And spotless as the unsunn'd snow ; wilt thou  
Yet wanton with the memory of thy sin, 745  
Bad thoughts at revel in thy heart, with vows  
Lightly made up of guilty breath impure,  
Pollute and sicken the clear air that dwells  
About the holy dwellings of the dead ;  
Waver from God to Pagan paramour 750  
With wandering loose affections.” “ Hard and cold,  
Be thou content to have robb'd this widow'd heart  
Of that most lovely breathing thing earth bore,  
But spare, oh spare, the sinless, senseless dead !  
Cruel, by yon bright stars I oft have sworn 755  
Ne'er to forego him ; shall I crown my sins  
With perjury ? I will weep, and fast, and pray,  
And wear the rough stones with my tender knees,  
So thou wilt leave me my sad thoughts of him.

Oh, God hath grace for all; my earliest prayer 760  
Shall be for mercy on his perish'd soul,  
The next for those who dying pray'd for me,  
And for my sad and sinful self the last."

Most exquisite sorcery of womankind !  
Even to the fall'n some cherish'd loveliness 765  
Yet clings, with innocent hypocrisy  
Tricking their failures in such tender hues,  
We blame with tears, enamour'd while we blame.  
Even thus her fervent constancy of love  
Brighten'd that guilty maiden.—" God will weigh 770  
With righteous hand thy sorrows and thy sins,  
Damsel, I nor absolve thee, nor condemn.  
Come thou with me, and we will reunite  
That beauteous boy's remains ; oh thou, even thou,  
Knew'st thou the studious cruelties, cold crimes 775  
By these barbarians wrought on this sad land,  
Wouldst pardon this dishonour to the corpse  
Of that brave youth."—She leap'd up to his neck,  
" And who art thou, that doest such savage deeds,  
Yet forcest us to love thee ;"—On they past, 780  
They reach'd the place of death, he dug away

The earth that fenc'd from wandering kite and wolf  
Young Abisa's fair limbs ; he sooth'd her woes  
By soft participation, her consol'd  
By suffering, and the Christian's voice rose up 785  
In prayers for mercy on a Saxon's soul.

## BOOK VII.

How measureless to erring human sight  
Is glory ! Glorious thy majestic state,  
Hengist ! with captive cities for thy thrones,  
And captive nations thy pale satellites,  
Britain, with all her beauty, power, and wealth, 5  
Thy palace of dominion. Glorious thou,  
Caswallon, in Cær Ebranc's stately courts,  
By the slow waters of the wandering Ouse,  
Bright-sceptred Renegade ! Even in your crimes  
Glitters a dazzling and meteorous pomp, 10  
Though your wild voyage hath lain through waves of  
blood,  
Ye ride triumphant in your royal port.  
But he, sad Pilgrim, outcast and forlorn,



How doth the midnight of his honour shame  
Your broad meridian, his wild freedom pass 15  
Your plenitude of sway, his nakedness  
Transcend your sweeping purples, rayed with gold !  
Nor wanteth to his state its gorgeous pride,  
And high peculiar majesty ; the pomp  
Of the conspiring elements sheds on him 20  
Tumultuous grandeurs ; o'er his midnight couch,  
Amid the scath'd oaks of the mountain moor,  
On its broad wings of gloom the tempest stoops.  
Around his head in crystal coronets  
The lightning falls, as though thy fiery hand, 25  
Almighty ! through the rolling clouds put forth,  
Did honour to the Freeman. Mighty winds  
And the careering thunders spread around  
Turbulent music ; darkness rivals day,  
And day with darkness vies in stateliest pride 30  
The Avengers's lofty miseries to array.  
When from the East forth leaps the warrior Sun  
In panoply of golden light, dark cowers  
His own proud eagle, marvelling what strong form,  
Uprising to usurp his haughty right, 35

Drinks in the intense magnificence with brow  
Undazzled and unshrinking; nor to him  
Fails homage from the living shapes of earth:  
On him the savage, fierce and monstrous, fawn  
Tame adoration; from his rugged sleep  
The wild boar, sleek his bristling wrath, aloof  
Shrinks, the grim wolf no more his rest disturbs,  
Than the calm motion of the moon she bays.

Now, by her native sylvan Wye, that Maid,  
Left to cold penitence and prayer, again  
Sets forth the high Avenger: now his path  
Through Towey's vale winds velvet soft and green.  
The year is in its waning autumn glow,  
But the warm Sun, with all his summer love,  
Hangs o'er this gentle valley, loath to part  
From the blue stream that to his amorous beams  
Now her cool bosom spreads, now coyer slides  
Under her alder shade, whose umbrage green,  
Glancing and breaking the fantastic rays,  
The deep dark mirror frets with mazy light.  
A day that seems in its rich noon to blend  
All seasons choice deliciousness, high hung

On Dinevaur and Carreg Cennon rude,  
And on bold Drusslyn gleam'd the woods their hues,  
Changeful and brilliant, as their leaves had drank 60  
The sun's empyreal fountains ; not more bright  
The groves of those Atlantic Isles, where rove  
(Dream'd elder Poesy such fancies sweet)  
The spirits of the brave, stern Peleus' son,  
And Diomed, through bowers that the blue air 65  
Arch'd with immortal spring of fragrant gold.  
The merry birds, as though they had o'erdream'd  
The churlish winter, spring-tide virelays  
Carolling, pruned their all-forgotten plumes.  
Upon the sunny shallow lay the trout 70  
Kindling the soft gems of its skin ; the snake  
As fresh and wanton in its green attire  
Wound its gay rings along the flowery sward.

That overpowering beauty in mild bonds  
Of sweet amazement and infatuate bliss, 75  
Took prisoner Samor's spirit. On a rock,  
'Neath a white canopy of glistening birch,  
He lay surrender'd. The thin whispering leaves,  
The welling waters flow, the lingering, long,

Love-dwelling descant of the joyous birds 80  
Came mingling with the languor of his sense,  
Most soothing each in turn, most slumb'ring soft.

'Tis no harsh breaking in that train of sound  
Delicious, but a low and measur'd dash  
That blends and deepens all the mingling tones; 85  
'Tis nought to cloud or dim that slow intrudes  
On the universal brilliance, crowning all  
Moves the gay apparition, and fires up  
The restless glittering to intenser blaze.

Slow up the tide the gaudy bark comes on, 90  
Her oars scarce startling the unruffled air;  
The waters to her swan-like prow give place,  
Along the oar-blades leap up to the sun  
In lucid flakes, and dance, as 'twere their sport  
To waft that beauteous freight. And exquisite 95  
As that voluptuous Memphian on the stream  
Of Cydnus, leading with bliss-breathing smiles  
Her throngs of rash beholders, glided down  
To welcome to his soft imprisonment  
The Lord of half the world, so wond'rous fair 100  
Under an awning cool of fluttering silk



The Lady of that graceful galley sate.  
But not in her instinct the melting form  
With passion, the smooth limbs in dazzling glow  
Translucent through the thin lascivious veil, 105  
Skilful with careless blandishments to fire  
The loose imaginations, she herein  
Least like that Oriental harlot Queen.  
Of all her shape, of all her soul was pride  
The sustenance, the luxury, the life. 110  
The innate scorn of her full eye repaid  
With lofty thanklessness the homage fawn'd  
By her fair handmaids, and her oarmen gay,  
Who seem'd to wanton in their servile toil.  
Around she gaz'd, as in her haughtiness 115  
She thought that God had form'd this living pomp  
Of woodland, stream, and rock, her height of soul  
To pamper, that to welcome her the earth  
Attired its breathing brightness, and the sun  
Only on her look'd from his azure sphere. 120

Knows Samor that bright Lady? Who knows not  
Amid her twinkling retinue of stars  
The queenly summer moon? Ye too he knows,  
The minion rowers of her royal state,

Entitled once by courteous falsehoods bland 125  
Nobles of Britain, from the general wreck  
Most despicably saved by Saxon scorn,  
Meet vassallage for Vortigern, now shrunk  
And dwindled from proud Britain's sov'reign lord  
To petty Prince of Dyfed.\* Ye yet cling 130  
Even to the hollow semblance of a crown,  
Ye gauzy summer motes, that float and bask  
In the warm noontide of a court, light things  
Of noise and glittering, that to royal ears  
Tinkle your poisonous flatteries, then most proud 135  
When most obtrusive your gay nothingness.

Under a rock where Samor lay unseen  
Beneath the sparkling birchen shade, the bark  
Glided so near, the silver-twinkling leaves  
Play'd like a wavering veil o'er the bright face 140  
And marble neck of that reclining Queen.

Now, Samor, now 'tis at thy thirsty lips  
The cup of vengeance, now quaff deep, quaff deep !  
Now, by the bones that bleach on Ambri plain,  
By thy lost Emeric's silent chamber bowers, 145  
By that soft cheek o'er which the primrose blooms,

\* Or, Dimetia, i. e. South Wales.

Now launch the unerring javelin! lo she tempts,  
 The Saxon's daughter, and the false King's bride,  
 The tame and baffled lingering of revenge.

And up the Avenger stood, a ray of light  
 Quiver'd the brandish'd javelin, creeping awe  
 Froze up the rowers hearts, down fell the oars,  
 And to the shore round swung the ungovern'd bark.

But 'mid those feminine and timorous men  
 Intrepid that soft lady her fair front  
 Advanc'd, and, "Who art thou, whose impious arm  
 'Gainst royalty's anointed head dare sway  
 Irreverent menace?"—"One whom grinding wrong,  
 And injuries savage, black, and manifold  
 Have almost madden'd to the deep base shame  
 Of soiling his bright arms with woman's blood."

(He cast the javelin from him, and went on)  
 "But tell thy sire, Rowena, tell thy lord,  
 Britons have yet to learn their codes of war,  
 That yet fastidious vengeance will not slake  
 But on a worthy victim its deep thirst."

Then was the mingling of their looks elate,  
 As when two falcons, far from this low earth,

Meet in the sun's broad blaze, they glad and proud  
Each of their kindred, flap their radiant wings. 170

“ I know thee now, majestic Rebel ! thee  
The untraceable, untameable ! I know  
The chosen Man of Fate ! of all our race  
The designated danger ; merciful  
Saxon ne'er coupled with thy name till now. 175  
Yet think not thou from rivalry aloof  
In proud and lonely excellence to stand,  
For with requital royal and profuse  
I will outsoar thee ; this white woman's hand  
Shall cast thee Hengist's pardon for thy deeds 180  
Of guilty fame ; this smooth and purple cheek  
Smile thee fair honours in Caer Merddhyn's court.”

“ Pardon, and honour, Lady ! one alone  
Jealous prerogative of pardon holds  
O'er Samor's soul, the universal God ! 185  
Caer Merddhyn's honours ! to fall'n Vortigern  
To be install'd prime flatterer, meekly laud  
The bounteous-hearted monarch, who cast off  
His throne, his people, and his fame, and thought  
For bride so fair the dowry all too poor.”



No wrath, but brighter joy the Lady's cheek  
Emblazon'd: "Why should slight and tinsel ties  
Of blood and birthplace hold asunder hearts  
Kindred in grandeur? thou art brave and free,  
And brave and free is Hengist; why disdains 195  
Valour to mate with valour, might with might?"  
"Valour beneath the sun goes proudly forth;  
And in the cloudy battle's van affronts  
His hauberck'd foe, but folds not secret steel  
Under the mild and festal robe of peace, 200  
Nor creeps with midnight stealth on the weak sleep  
Of women and soft infants."—Then appear'd  
Tears in her haughty eyes, tears beautiful,  
For drops of shame they were for those black crimes  
That fleck'd and dimm'd her father's blaze of fame. 205  
Still paus'd not the Avenger.—"Did my God,  
Did Britain claim the offering, I dare hope  
Yet I could rend from this worn heart away  
Its pleasant lust of vengeance; private wrongs  
Are but thin drops in my full tide of hate; 210  
But all my country's injuries, all my God's  
Concentrate in the mighty passion flood,

My life, my soul, my being; we must be,  
I and thy father, through all space of time,  
Even to the end, Destroyer or Destroy'd." 215

"Harsh and Implacable! yet be not thou  
Discourteous: wilt thou to *Caer Merddhyn* come,  
An honour'd guest, in freedom to depart  
When, where thou wilt, thy pledge my royal faith?"

"A Saxon's faith!" burst bitter from his lips, 220  
He check'd the upbraiding tone. "If fraud and sin  
In such a lovely temple hold their shrine,  
It were not strange did fiends of darkness dwell  
Within yon beauteous sun!" But she with smile  
Mild as May morning on a violet bank, 225  
"Why stayst thou? can the Unconquerable fear ——?"  
"Fear, Lady! fear and I are strangers now."  
"What wondrous spell," pursued her playful mirth,  
"So steels thee"—"One most simple and most strong,  
A calm proud conscience, and a faith in God." 230

Then sate he by the Lady's side; set forth  
Upon its dancing voyage down the tide  
The bark obeisant to its dashing oars.  
But those gay rowers veering with the wind

Of soft court favour, 'gan with subtle joy 235  
And cold factitious transport hail again  
Their gentle peer, their old and honour'd friend.  
But with a glance the imperial lady froze  
To silence their smooth-lying lips, nor brook'd  
Idle intrusion on her rapturous feast. 240  
Deep drank she in the majesty and pomp,  
Wherewith instinct the Avenger mov'd and spake,  
And what high beauty from heroic soul  
Emanates on the outward shape, nor pall'd  
On her insatiate appetite the joy ; 245  
Till that commercing deep of stately thoughts,  
Proud admiration, and intense delight  
In what is heart-subliming, towering, grand,  
Regenerate from the trance that bath'd her sense,  
Sprang up a fiery passion, o'er her flow'd 250  
Secret the intoxicating extacy,  
Love, dangerous, deep, intolerable love.

What beauteous seeming and magnificent,  
Weareth that brilliant sin ! now not o'er her  
Came it in melting languor, soft and bland, 255  
But like her own high nature, eminent,

Disdainful, and elate, allied to all  
That beautified, that glorified, and seem'd  
Mysterious union of upsoaring spirits,  
Wedding of lofty thoughts with lofty thoughts, 260  
And the fine joy of being to this earth  
A thing of wonder: and as floats the air  
Clear, white, and stainless in the highest heavens,  
Seem'd from its exaltation fresh and pure,  
Above all taint her amorous madness rose. 265  
Had it seem'd love, her very pride had quell'd  
The unplum'd phantasy, her inbred scorn  
Warr'd on the young infirmity, but now  
Upon her soul's bold crest it planted high  
Its banner of dominion, and she hail'd 270  
Its coming as a guest of pomp and power.

But, though o'er all her features mantling spread  
A vivid restlessness, a lustrous glow,  
A deepening purple, though her eye indulg'd  
Richer delirium, though her languid breath 275  
Came with a throb and struggle from her heart,  
Yet in that noble kindness that disdains  
With greedy and suspicious gaze to search



The sin that may be, rather chastening all  
With his own native purity, serene 280  
The Warrior sate. The placid gliding bark,  
With motion like to stillness, flowing on,  
Where with green diadem of woods above,  
Beneath the white breadth of the expanding stream,  
Caer Merddhyn in the liquid noontide rose. 285

Fair rose Caer Merddhyn, rose her towery height  
The air enriching, nor mis-seem'd a King  
Such stately dwelling ; populous her streets,  
And throng'd with human faces, but o'er all  
A lassitude and heavy sadness hung, 290  
Blankness of looks and weariness of hearts,  
And listlessness of motion faltering on.  
With all the pomps, the luxuries of life,  
It seem'd a city of the dead. The shapes,  
The steps of men were there, but soul and spirit, 295  
And stirring energy, and vivid mind,  
Passion and earnestness in torpor slept,  
The cold blood stagnate in the drowsy veins.  
Alike all feelings lazy languor seal'd ;  
To still them, not delight, the mothers held 300

Their infants, as the radiant Queen past on ;  
But even in them the laughing spring of joy  
Was dead, and dry, and frozen.—“ Oh, high God !  
(So spake the Wanderer in his secret soul)  
Hath tyranny such bleak and withering power 305  
Man’s heavenly essence to embrute, and thou,  
Once princely Vortigern, the tyrant thou !”—

Worse sight ! worse shame ! they reach the broad hill’s  
brow,

Where in its royalty the palace look’d  
Awe on its vassal city ; there, even there, 310  
On that high threshold, armed Saxon files  
From the weak people fenc’d the weaker King.  
But through that legion hateful and accurst  
Onward the Avenger that bright Lady’s hand  
Led, as the Sybil sage the Love-queen’s son 315  
Calm through the doleful regions of the dead.

Within the hall with royal banners hung,  
And shields of royal blazon, royal arms,  
Least royal he, sate Vortigern ; deep thought  
And miserable on his faded brow 320  
Traced its bleak lines, before him glittering lay

The crown of Britain, which his eye perused  
With a sick sadness, as each gem were full  
Of woeful ruminations, blank remorse ;  
And as bad Angels loathe, yet upward watch, 325  
Heaven's Sun, bright type of their once radiant state,  
Even so in bitterness that fallen King,  
Painfully banquetting on self-reproach,  
A drear remembrance of lost grandeurs drew  
From that fair ring, and curs'd its blaze that flash'd 330  
Past splendours o'er the darkness of his soul,  
And memory from what height to what depth sunk,  
He welters in the abyss of shame profound.  
Beside him o'er his harp Aneurin bow'd,  
The white-hair'd Bard, sole faithful he, sole friend ; 335  
For minds of poets from their own high sphere  
Look down on earth's distinctions, high and low,  
Sunken or soaring, as the equal sun  
Sheds light along the vale and mountain's brow.  
He in the hall of feasting who fast seal'd 340  
The treasures of his harmony, now pours  
Into the wounded heart his syrups sweet,  
And laps it in the silken folds of sound.

But even along his strings the infectious grief  
Hath crept, and wither'd up their wantonness 345  
And lost in wayward wanderings of despair  
Stray the vague tones; anon bursts full and free  
A start, a swell of pride, then sinks away  
Involuntary to such doleful fall,  
Misery so musical, its languid breath] 350  
Feeds, while it softens the deep-rooted woe.  
Such melodies at tragic midnight heard  
'Mid a deserted city, gliding o'er  
The deep green moss of tower and fane o'erthrown,  
Had seem'd immortal sorrows in the air, 355  
O'er man's inconstant grandeurs. Sad such wreck,  
More sad, more worthy Angels woe the waste  
And desolation of a noble mind,  
High fertile faculties run wild and rank,  
Bright fiery qualities in darkness slaked. 360  
That liquid intercourse of grief broke off,  
Thus spake the King—"Who thus unbidden bursts  
On kingly solitude? why ask I thee?  
No brow between the Scot and Southern sea  
Beareth such gallant insolence abroad, 365



But Samor, the wild Wanderer, the denounc'd,  
The desperate ! Art thou here to stun mine ears  
With " Vortigern is abject, lost, disgrac'd ?"  
'Tis well that with thee comes my bright excuse,  
My poverty's rich treasure, my night's star, 370  
Beauteous Rowena."—Joy seem'd his, but yet  
Was effort and was struggle in that joy,  
The clinging of a desperate soul to what  
It would delight in, but did not delight,  
The striving of a barren heart to force 375  
The perish'd bloom of pleasure,—“ King, I come  
To put a spell upon thee, conjure up  
Thy valour from its tomb within thy breast,  
To rend the adamant that trammels fast  
Thy strength of soul. By yon bright glaive that smote  
By Esk's wild bank, beneath his father's shield, 381  
The royal Caledonian's son ; yon flag,  
That, when by fated Arles rash Britain lost  
Her wild bright hazard for imperial state,  
Clouding the car of adverse victory shook 385  
Untarnish'd in the sun its blazon broad,  
Nor stoop'd, though all was fallen ; by you rich crown,

Whereon when flow'd the holy oil, this isle  
From all her seas her gratulant acclaim  
Sent up, and overcast heaven's vault with joy ; 390  
By Vortigern, the great, the brave, the wise !"—  
“ Brave ! wise ! aye, that it is. The veriest wretch  
That from base birth-place to his baser grave,  
Creeps with his fellow reptiles, that ne'er knew  
What luxury 'tis, what loftiness to soar, 395  
And with one soul to wield a host of souls  
In free subjection, oh that fireless dust,  
Clay uninform'd, that only lives to die,  
That is to me a God : to me whose curse,  
And brand, and mock it is to have been great— 400  
And be—oh ! Samor, Samor, I was King,  
King of this spacious, rich, and glorious isle,  
And thou, and such as thou, my regal state  
Didst vassal ; now, but now an eye may trace  
The circuit of my realm, a shepherd's boy 405  
Count my thin people, like his mountain flock.”

“ Oh, Monarch, ill must be atoned by good,  
And to repentant deeds of mightiest fame  
Heaven can upraise the farthest sunken. Power

Fails not the aspirant will. I knew thee once 410  
A being of those arduous energies,  
Strong aspirations, graspings undefin'd,  
Tumultuous thirsts and passions, that of man  
Make Fiend or Angel."—" True, too true, but thou  
Hast seiz'd the Seraph's air-plum'd wings, and I 415  
The Demon's vans of darkness. Had all fallen,  
All perish'd, one wide ignominy swept  
Princes and Lords and People, I had found  
A forlorn comfort in the general wreck ;  
But in its curst sublimity thy fame 420  
Obtrudes its radiant presence, and makes groan  
This ruin of a Monarch."—" Rare it is,  
Oh King, in Fame's rich galaxy to shine  
With steadfast blaze unwithering, but to dawn  
From darkness, scatter off the black eclipse 425  
That veils the wither'd lustre, this most rare,  
Maketh man's soul an everlasting fire  
Worthy the God that hung the Heavens with light ;  
'Tis hard for downcast spirit to o'erleap  
Ruin's sad barriers, but Heaven's angels drop 430  
Soft dews beneath his burning feet, his flight

Imp with strong plumes ; his coming doth adorn  
The earth he moves on ; till Remorse abash'd  
Before the orient glories fades and flies."—

“ Peace ! peace ! thou canst not see what cold within  
Lies like a palsy on the flagging powers, 436  
Makes me a thin and shrinking reed, the sport  
Of every lazy wind, the shape, the life,  
The woe, without the faculties of man,  
Shame, shame.—Oh, turn thy lofty brow away, 440  
Heavy it hangs o'er me like loosen'd crag  
Over the mountain traveller—I endure,  
Of all this nation, the curse wrinkled lips,  
Out-pointed fingers, ribald jests, coarse scorns.  
Men that have lick'd the dust beneath my feet, 445  
Worn their tame faces by the mould of mine,  
Them, to confront even them.”—Unkingly tears  
Chok'd the full utterance, met his eye the glance  
Of that proud Queen, who, all unmark'd, drank in  
That passionate discourse, from her contempt, 450  
Though far below his own, he shrunk, and wrought  
To a brief pride his wan dejected mien.  
“ Here is my throne, my kingdom in this breast,



My diadem the wealth of light that shines  
From yon fair brow upon me.”—Stronger pain 455  
Burst in upon the infant pride: forth fled  
The Monarch, happy could he fly himself.  
Him follow’d that old Bard. ’Tis vain, all vain,  
(Thus spake the high Avenger.) “Beauteous Queen,  
I claim thy faith, and part.”—“So swift, so soon, 460  
Our festal cheer untasted, welcome cup  
Uncrown’d?”—“Fair Queen, in the pellucid stream  
My beverage dances; the coarse mountain boor  
Shares his hard fare with me; the hand that feasts  
The winged wanderers of the air, feasts me.” 465  
With lips in act of speech apart, the Queen,  
As to her will her tongue disdainful scorn’d  
Allegiance, chain’d in silence stood again.  
Twice she essay’d to speak, twice o’er her shame  
Swept his petrific hand, and rosy fire 470  
O’er face and neck and forehead flush’d, till shrunk  
From that strong heat the eye, and down on earth  
Settled its close fring’d orb; with pressure soft  
Her blushing fingers his bronzed hand embrac’d.  
“Here in this palace is my rule, this land 475

Is mine by my prevailing power, would'st thou  
Of this high seat, this realm be Lord?—Why starts  
Unwonted colour to thy cheek? why shrinks  
Into its sphere thine eye? Said I this soul,  
And what soft beauty glitters in this shape, 480  
Had it appall'd thee?"—Eagerly she grasp'd  
The hand she held, as though from thence to wring  
A swift reply, yet gaz'd upon the earth,  
As wistful 'neath its darkness she might shrink  
From her own shame. Blank wonder Samor's brow 485  
To living stone congeal'd—"This then the close  
To all thy lavish love of Vortigern!"

"My love! he was a King, upon his brow  
The beauty of a royal crown, his height  
Dominion, like a precious mantle, dipt 490  
In heaven's pure light array'd, and o'er him flung  
Transcendant grandeur; above all he stood,  
And I by such fond splendours wooed and won,  
Took seat upon his eminence; a plant  
To spread, and mantle an imperial throne, 495  
Not like tame ivy round a ruin creep,  
Or wreath the tomb of royalty. His pride

I wedded, not his shame ; bats may not build  
With the light-loving lark. He, he himself  
By self-abasement has divorc'd me, set 500  
Distance between us wide and far as heaven  
From the black pit of infamy."—" High Queen,  
What seest thou in this bleak and batter'd brow,  
These rough scath'd limbs, this wan and sunken face,  
With misery's rugged furrows deeply plough'd, 505  
To dazzle or delight ? Lone outcast I,  
Friendless, but daily, nightly by fierce foes  
Beset and hunted like a loathsome brute ;  
Thy nation's mothers vent all hate on me,  
Link with a scathing curse no name but mine. 510  
Oh, what would'st thou and softness with a life  
Like mine so dreary, desperate, dark, and fierce ?"

" Oh, 'tis because all hate thee, that I love,  
Because all dread thee, I would mate with thee,  
Thy miseries, thy dangers deeper plunge 515  
My soul in passion, that alone thou walk'st,  
Smote at by every arm, yet struck by none,  
That mastery of thy single soul holds down  
The Saxons mounting empire, clips it wings

Rapacious and wide-shadowing, that thy fame 520  
Like a rich rainbow cloud, sails on through air,  
To mortal grasp impalpable, to sight  
In lonely brilliance manifest ; my soul  
To that thy airy chariot would aspire,  
And dazzle by thy side, and daunt the world.”— 525

“ Loose and unrighteous to thy lawful Lord,  
Yet would'st thou poison with adulterous shame  
Its spotless lustre, its pure white defile,  
And clog with guilt its vaunted wheels.”—“Guilt! Guilt!  
Ah, now I know why mine eye shrunk from thine, 530  
Why sought the base earth, why brook'd not my tongue  
The motions of my will—but we—shrink we?  
The lofty are their own high law ; dull codes,  
Cold customs, trammel but the base ; our sins  
Shall be the wanderings of the meteor fire, 535  
More wonder'd than the regular calm stars :  
Our acting shall ennoble, what tame tongues  
Falter at even in word, opinions hues  
Shall at our haughty bidding shift and change,  
And what we do, shall therefore be call'd great. 540  
Yes, yes, I feel thy shrinking hand, I see



White-lipp'd abhorrence quivering in thy mien  
As at some loathsome viper. Woe, oh woe  
To him that tramples on the viper's wrath."—  
Then shook she back her golden hair, away 545  
Cast his cold hand.—“ Ho, Saxons at the gate,  
Ho, Saxons, to your injured Queen !” The hall  
Sudden was walled with fiery arms and spears  
Bickering fierce menace ; numerous, swift, and strong,  
As when old Cadmus by clear Dirce spread 550  
That dangerous seed uncouth, long, wide, and bright  
Under the fatal ploughshare leap'd to life,  
To havock the wild harvest, and shook up  
Its bearded grim fertility of death.  
But then his sword the Avenger grasp'd, and cried,  
“ Twice have I trusted Saxon faith, and twice 556  
Beneath my feet the smooth fair ice hath burst  
Its glassy treachery : once this arm redeem'd  
The infatuate blindness. Saxons, I am he,  
Who with his single strength on Ambri plain 560  
Scared your hot massacre, your proudest necks  
Strew'd for his pavement of retreat, ye see  
Mine arm unwither'd, my unbroken sword.”

But they sprung onward ; that bright Lady's brow  
Awful delight absorb'd the while, she moved 565  
Before their wrath, her arm's high sway wav'd back  
Their fury from her presence. Swift they came,  
Swift they departed ; silence down the walls  
Crept o'er the banners broad, and pendant shields. 570

She look'd on Samor, all his pride was hers, 570  
She look'd on Samor, all that pride was quench'd  
In exquisite mild transport ; at his feet  
The Queen, the haughty, the disdainful fell.  
Her fine fair hair lay floating on the earth ;  
Her round arms clung beseeching to his knees. 575

“ A curse upon me, that my wilful heart  
'Gainst head so brave, so noble, dream'd of wrath,  
Of danger and rude menace. What I did,  
I know not, what I said, it pleased not thee,  
Enough, 'twas base, 'twas criminal, 'twas false. 280  
Oh Chief ! when we would compass wild desires,  
Words alien to the heart start up, yet seem  
Most strong persuasion ; of all serpents, scorn  
Stings to worse frenzy, worst a woman's soul.  
Forget, all, all forget, but one soft word, 585

And that I charge thee, by thy rescued life,  
Forget not."—"Lady, were I rich in love,  
As yon full Sun in light, I could not spare  
A beam upon a Saxon. Now, but now  
The fountains of my heart are dry, the stock 590  
Where fresh and rich my green affections bloom'd,  
Is wither'd to the root ; hard, doleful, dead,  
My breast's impassive iron scatters off  
All melting blandishments, all soft delights,  
As the wav'd banner the thin morning dews. 595  
With one harsh discord to consummate all ;  
Thou art thy Father's daughter."—She arose  
In miserable calmness resolute.  
She took his hand, she led him forth, beneath  
The murky scowling of those Saxons stern, 600  
Whose angry wonder scarce herself controll'd :  
Gave one fond lingering pressure, and but one,  
Then watch'd him through the city, up the vale,  
If gazing with such emptiness of eye  
Were watching, which his distance seem'd to freeze 605  
Gradual to hollower wanness ; down her arms  
Hung, only that she stood and faintly breath'd,  
Pulse, motion, sense, life, all seem'd fled with him.

Sudden above her, the mild air 'gan waft  
Wild fiery sounds, like those of battle morn 610  
Which champing war-steed's neigh, and lance's rush,  
Impatient answers. On the palace top  
Aneurin in his bardic glory stood ;  
The sunlight on his old prophetic brow  
Flash'd strong, yet dazzled not, his long white locks 615  
Stream'd back upon his azure robe, like rack  
O'er heaven's unclouded blue, his pale thin hand  
With strength of mounting phrenzy launch'd abroad  
The war-song of Cassivelan : glad sounds  
To that transc'd queen, for Samor's hastier port 620  
Deliberate grandeur slacken'd, he look'd back,  
Proud gratitude for that wild flattery.—“ All,  
All in one wide conspiracy, (so spake  
Rowena's bitter joy) thee, only thee  
To glorify. Oh, were man mute, this earth 625  
Would leap to utterance of thy fame, the winds  
Find voices eloquent, the streams, the stones,  
To lofty music burst of thy renown.”

Slowly retired the Queen ; she call'd around  
Her slaves, her handmaids ; arrogant their looks 630  
Seem'd to confront her, eyes aye wont to shrink



Before her gaze, now seem'd to pry and pierce  
Her deepest soul's recesses ; and she blush'd  
Even in her plenitude of scorn. They stood  
Trembling before her wayward mood, yet seem'd 635  
Mockeries their tremors ; solitude she sought,  
Yet solitude found none, things senseless took  
Stern cognizance of all her acts, her thoughts :  
Eyes hung the empty walls, weak laughing sounds  
Of triumph o'er her shame, pervaded wide 640  
The tranquil air, all with herself at league  
Shook scorns upon herself. Dim evening falls,  
O'er earth and sky, slow flits the shadowy night.  
“ Slaves there !” she cried, “ my steed ! alone I ride.”  
She wont to find her every look a law, 645  
Now almost wonders all so swift obey.

The moon's white sickle tenderly array'd  
With dubious lustre the gray heavens ; scarce tinged  
The dew-webs, whiten'd not the yellow crown  
Of the unwaving forest ; ignorant, 650  
Or with feign'd ignorance 'guiling even herself,  
Long upon Samor's track the Lady rides.

’Tis not a stag that couches on the heath ;

Hope on her dim cheek brightens, from her steed  
Soft she dismounts, she ruffles not the fern, 655  
The moss springs printless up beneath her feet,  
So light her gliding to that slumbering man.  
She knows him, she starts back.—“ Oh, came I here,  
Lost and abas'd, him, only him to seek,  
That answers mine immodest heart with flight, 660  
With scorn, perchance with hate ! yet wonderous he,  
Wonderous in rest as action ! Sleep'st thou calm,  
While numberless as these brown heath-spikes rise  
Legions of spears around thee, for thy blood  
Leagued in one furious thirst ? Unwise and rash ! 665  
To night thou slumber'st not unguarded, sleep ;  
And if Rowena mingle with thy dreams,  
Sleep calmly, breathingly as now ! He wakes—  
Oh, hateful even in slumber that harsh name  
Grates on his sense.”—His eyes unfold, nor start, 670  
So soft the vision ; wonder's self is calm,  
And quaffs it in with mild unshrinking gaze.  
Her long bright hair, like threads of silver streak  
The moonlight, her fair forehead's marble arch  
Wild joyous fearfulness, extatic doubt, 675

Bathe with the dewiness of melting snow,  
Ere yet unblanch'd its stainless glitter pure.  
Oh, soft and slow that melody of mien  
Steals o'er the slumberer, ere the reason woke,  
The sense was drunken, one hand folded her's 680  
That answer'd not its pressure, nor withdrew,  
Tremulous, yet motionless: his rising head  
Found on her other arm such pillowing soft,  
As the fond ringdove on its mate's smooth down.  
They spake not, moved not. 'Tis the noon of night, 685  
Hour known to Samor not by sign or sound  
Of man's wise art to mark the fleeting time,  
Nor changing of the starry heavens; but e'er  
By motion of the secret soul, by calm  
Habitual sliding into the sooth'd heart, 690  
Distinct from turbulent day and weary eve,  
Emeric's own hour, her consecrated spot  
In his life's wilderness. She comes, she comes,  
The clouds have dropt her from their silvery folds;  
The mild air wafts her, the rank earth impure 695  
Stainless she skims, distrust, doubt, fear, no place  
Find in the sinless candour of her mien.

In languid soft security she melts  
On Samor's fever'd soul, she fills his sense,  
Her softness like the nightingale's first notes 700  
After rude evening, o'er his passion steals :  
He cast not off Rowena's hand, it fell  
As from a dead man's grasp ; slow rose his head  
From its fair zone, as from a bank of snow  
The winter traveller, by its smoothness guil'd 705  
Almost to deathful sleep ; he dares not now  
Welcome that heavenly visitant, nor could,  
Nor would he her mild rescue bid depart.  
Nor dares he now with chill abhorrence shrink  
From that empassion'd Lady ; on his lips 710  
Clung wretched, pale, beseechingness, that framed  
Nor word nor sound. But time for thought in her  
Gave time for shame, for struggling pride gave time.  
“ Thou deem'st me loose, wild, wanton, deem'st me come  
To lure thee with light sweets of lawless love, 715  
Hunting mine own shame through the midnight woods.  
Oh false, all false.—How thee shall I persuade,  
Aye me ! that scarce persuade myself, 'twas chance,  
'Twas fate, 'twas ministration of bad spirits,



That led me thoughtless, hopeless—did I say 720  
Hopeless? yet scorn not thou, the lightest won  
Are oft best won. Oh why, ere now so mild,  
So gentle, why so stern, so ghastly still?"  
"Thou lov'st my pride, my honour, my renown;  
Now, Queen Rowena, may'st thou do a deed 725  
Shall make my pride thine own, make thee my fount  
Of honour, all my noontide of renown  
On thee in all its golden brilliance shine;  
And if henceforth man's voice cry out, High deeds  
Hath Samor's arm achiev'd, thy heart shall bound 730  
And thy lips answer, 'Mine! all mine!' and I  
Will bless thee, thank thee, praise thee for that truth."

O'er proud Rowena past his solemn voice  
Tremendously delightful, as the sound  
Of thunder over Jove's bolt-minist'ring bird, 735  
That sternly rocks on th' agitated air.  
"Speak, speak, 'tis hours, 'tis years until 'tis done."  
Return'd one brief, one powerful word—"Depart."  
She struggled yet to wear the lofty light  
That flush'd her brow, she struggled, and she fell 740  
Her white arms round his neck. Light as the breeze

Pass'd over his her cheek. Then back  
She started, seiz'd her courser's rein; far, far  
The rocks gave answer to its trampling hoofs.

To solitude, to peace, ah, not to peace! 745  
Was Samor left; large dewy beads distil  
From his full brow, as from the forest leaves  
The sunny icicle: fierce, merciless,  
Relentless inquest o'er himself he holds,  
In him a sin in thought is sin in deed. 750

“ And I, that on the frantic waxen wings  
Of mine own arrogance, have deem'd my soul  
Kindred and heritor of that rich bliss  
That batlies the Angels radiant wings in strength;  
That wander'd o'er this sublunary wild 755  
As with a charter'd scorn, that mix'd with men  
But in disdainful mastery to o'er-rule  
Their dim and wavering destinies, that took  
With noble violence admiring earth,  
O'er me hath passion wound her silken nets; 760  
And that soft Dalila, lascivious sin,  
Shorn my full honours. Now, who clothed my steps  
With darkness, dread, and danger, hung my arms

With light'ning, kept at bay the envious death  
That feasts upon the famous of mankind ; 765  
God, God abandons me. So farewell pride,  
And with pride farewell strength, the burning hope,  
Glad agonies, brave bliss of holy war,  
Transports of trampling on my country's foes,  
And all the beauty, majesty, renown, 770  
Vengeance, of thy triumphal state. Ye too,  
Farewell, soft midnights, delicate regards  
Fix'd on me from fond eyes yet bright from heaven,  
Mild agitations of the purer sense,  
Fresh bloomings of my faded joys, ye dreams 775  
Lovelier than actual bliss, as heaven than earth,  
Emeric abandons me. For how can snow  
Drop on this foul earth stainless ? how canst thou  
Visit unsullied thy sad shrine defil'd,  
Or beam upon this lust-benighted heart ? 780  
Oh never felt before, the fear to front  
Mine own past life, the ignoble shame that burns  
At human sight, and memory that ne'er sleeps ;  
Heart-sickening at its own deformities,  
A miserable welcome bid I ye, 785

Come, dismal comforters, faint-footed guides,  
Teach me the hate of life, the dread of death."

And Samor wander'd on, not now with scope  
Resolv'd, and steady purpose that absorb'd  
And fix'd on one stern centre all his soul, 790  
True as the arrow to its mark. Now where,  
Whither, is all indifferent, he pursues  
The wildering of the forest track, the brook  
Winding its lucid error: two sad days  
And chance hath led him back to Wye's green bank. 795

Sudden before him swept in gallant pack,  
Fleet hounds, whose keen scent quaff'd the morning dews.  
Sole on their track a noble huntsman bow'd  
O'er his steed's high-curv'd neck. But when he saw  
Samor, that scarce his coming mark'd or heard, 800  
He vaulted from his uncheck'd steed so fleet,  
The courser seem'd to feel it not, but on  
Went stately bounding down the glen. But he  
Unslung his bugle horn, his hunting spear  
Cast to the winds, and held his burnish'd sword 805  
To heaven, as though to paragon its light.

"Oh, thunderer Thor, but one bold prayer of mine



E'er scaled thy heavens, and that, munificent,  
I thank thee for thy granting. Samor now,  
Now Christian, now baptiz'd in German blood, 810  
Avenger, we are met, and ere we part,  
Earth must be ruddier with some blood of ours."

"Noble Argantyr, deem not thou unknown  
Thy name, thy presence, nor forgot, how thou,  
When Murther quaff'd his glut on Ambri plain, 815  
Didst hold thy jealous steel aloft, lest stain  
From gore by treason shed, should dim its gleam;  
And when I burst my iron toils, and won  
My dangerous safety, how indignant joy  
Stood bathing thy stern brow. Brave Anglian, thou, 820  
But thou, of German race, to faint sloth chill'st  
My sword's quick wrath."—"What, Samor out of love  
With strife, with music of conflicting steel?  
Hath Abisa's pale blood so quench'd his fire?  
Were't not I now could force my glorious will, 825  
Yea, I could sue thee, Briton, for the joy.  
Thou wilt not credit, air hath been defil'd  
With creeping whispers cold, that I, I shrunk  
To second in his dangers that brave boy,

As though Argantyr would partake a foe, 830  
And with division spiritless and base,  
Mete out his province in one man to slay,  
Hear ; ‘ Well the famous Anglian won his half  
Of that great conquest !’ But I have thee now  
Whole, undivided, now, or man, or more, 835  
If aught be mortal in thee, guard that spot,  
My steel will search it.”—“ Samor is not now  
As Samor was, but knows not yet to scorn  
Such brave allurements.” Forth his anlace flash’d,  
But not as wont, uplooks he to the sky ; 840  
He thinks not now, oh, if I fall, float near,  
My Emeric, that no Angel’s voice but thine  
Welcome thy Samor to his opening heaven :  
And if I vanquish, Britain and the Lord  
Take to your hecatomb one Saxon more. 845

But on Argantyr sprung, as wanton boy  
To the cool health of summer streamlet pure :  
Around, above, beneath his winged sword  
Leaps in its fiery joy, red, fierce and far  
As from a midnight furnace start the sparks. 850  
As brazen statue on proud palace top,

Shakes off the pelting tempest, so endur'd  
Samor, but not in patient hope austere  
Of victory ; but habitual skill and power  
Protracting long the cold indifferent strife ;  
Till twice that sword that in its downward sweep  
Flash'd the white sunlight, cloudy rose and dim  
With ominous purple : then his nature burst  
Its languid bonds, not front alone to front ;  
But soul to soul the riot of the fight  
They mingle, like to giddy chariot wheels  
The whirling of their swords, as fierce the din  
Of buckler brast, helm riven, and breastplate cloven,  
As when the polar wind the ice field rends.  
Such nobleness sublime of hideous fight  
From Ilion's towers her floating mantled dames  
Saw not, nor Thebes, when Capaneus call'd down  
Jove's thunder, and disdain'd its fall, nor pride  
Of later Bards, when mad Orlando met  
On that frail bridge the giant Sarzan king,  
And with him in the boiling flood dash'd down,  
Till that fond eagerness, that brave delight  
O'erpower'd frail nature, breathless each, and each

Careless, yet conscious of deep trenching wounds,  
For admiration paus'd, for hope, for power 875  
To satiate the unwearying strong desire.

Lo, the far hills Argantyr first descried  
Radiant with spearmen, and he cried, " Away,  
'Tis Hengist with his bloody bands, I know  
The motion of his crest ; brave Chief, away."— 880  
" Away ! and leave Argantyr here to boast  
Samor hath fled him !"—" Oh, we meet again ;  
Thou art a quarry for the Gods, base lance  
Must ne'er vaunt blood of thine. Argantyr spares  
But for himself such noble game. Still here ! 885  
Froward and furious, if thou need'st must die,  
Why so must I ; fell Hengist will not spare  
An inch of quivering life on all thy limbs.  
And I with such a jealous lust pursue  
A noble conquest o'er thee, I must shield 890  
Thy life with mine, for my peculiar fame ;  
Freely mine own death on the hazard cast  
For such a precious stake as slaying thee."

As through dusk twilight stolen, love-breathless maid  
For interchange of gentle vows, by noise 895



Startled of envious footstep, chides away  
Her lingering youth, yet for his lingering loves,  
Till her fond force hath driven him from her side;  
So earnest the brave Anglian sued to flight  
Reluctant Samor; o'er his sword hilt bow'd, 900  
Stood sorrowing for the wounds himself had made,  
That marr'd his speedier flight. Anon approach'd  
Hengist, encircled by his state of spears,  
And bright Rowena by his side. "But now  
Thy steed along our camp rush'd masterless, 905  
Therefore we seek thee, Anglian. How! thou bleedst!  
And strange! thy foeman bites not the red earth.  
What might hath scathless met Argantyr's steel?"

"He, gasp'd he here in death, thy soul would dance,  
The Wanderer!"—"He! he wars but on soft boys, 910  
He dare not front Argantyr."—"False, 'tis false!"  
Burst from Rowena; "he dares deeds our Gods  
Had shrunk from (Hengist's cloudy brow she mark'd),  
Or whence his proud claim to my father's hate?"  
"Where hath the Recreant fled? Pursue, pursue!" 915  
Cried Hengist. "Hast thou wings to cleave the air?  
Or windest the deep bosom of the earth,

Thou may'st o'ertake. Yet Samor is not now,"  
He said, "as Samor was; were Samor more,  
Earth and Argantyr had been wed erenow." 920

So spake the Anglian; leap'd Rowena's heart  
In hope, in shame, in anguish, in delight.  
"Oh, hath my softness sunk so deep to change  
Thy steadfast nature, yet thus chang'd, thy might  
Wrests honour from thy foeman's lips."—"Oh now," 925  
Laughing in baffled bitterness, exclaim'd

The Saxon King, "now weave we softer nets  
To toil this dangerous Wanderer. What say'st thou,  
Fair-ey'd Rowena, now thou hast cast off  
Thy fond, thy lovesick Vortigern? perchance" 930  
The sunshine of thy beauty might melt down  
This savage to a tame submissive slave."

Rowena, whose proud look with beauteous awe  
Smote her beholders, wore her loveliness  
As though she gloried in its power; now close 935  
Crowded o'er all her face her mantle's folds,  
That ill conceal'd the purple fire within.  
Then forward past they to the Saxon camp.

But far by Wye's green marge had Samor fled,

Till now the ebbing blood with short quick throb 940  
Beat at his heart, his languid feet were clogg'd  
With the thick forest leaves, the keen air search'd  
With a cold thrill his wounds. He falls, scarce sobs;  
“ Merciful God, on this in all my life  
The sole, the single day I would not die.” 945  
Then faint, and sickly, an oppressive rest  
Seal'd sight and sense. When sleep fell on him, eve  
Was gathering fast, but when he woke, morn shot  
From the gray cast her faint pellucid light  
His blood was staunch'd, a soothing coolness lay 950  
On his mild wounds, the rude arch of the boughs  
Seem'd woven with officious care to veil,  
The bright Sun from his eyelids; the dry leaves  
Were gathered round him, like a feathery couch.  
He lay and listen'd, a soft step approach'd 955  
Light as the wren along the unshaking spray,  
And o'er him lean'd a maiden pale, yet blithe  
With tinge of joy, that settled hue.—“ Is't thou,  
Gentle Myfanwy ?” “ Blessings on thy waking;  
I long'd to tell thee what sweet dreams have sooth'd 960  
My sorrows since we parted; in my sleep

My parents came, and with them that fond youth,  
And they smil'd on him kindly. 'Think'st thou God  
Can have such mercy on sins dark as mine !"

"God's plenteous mercies on thee for thy care      965  
Of me, sweet maiden."—"Pardon me, oh thou,  
Heaven pardon me, when first I saw thee cold,  
Helpless, and bleeding, evil thoughts arose  
Of my poor Abisa's untimely death."

But deeper meditation Samor's mind      970  
Beset. "Almighty, truly thou ordain'st  
Wisdom from baby lips ; what moral high  
Breathes in this simple maid's light-hearted smiles !  
And I, for wisdom fam'd, for pride of mind,  
Insulted with weak doubts thy infinite,      975  
Illimitable goodness ; she so soft,  
So delicate, so sinful and so sad,  
Springs on her airy plumes of hope to thee.  
Oh, were mine guilt of act not thought, the stain  
Thy fount of living mercy might efface."      980  
He prest a kiss upon her cheek so pure  
Even Abisa had granted it. "Farewell,  
My kind preserver, cherish thou thy hope,



As 'twere an infant fondling on thy breast."

And fresh with hope, like gay stag newly bath'd, 985

Forth on his voyage lone the Avenger past.

## BOOK VIII.

HIS path is 'mid the Cambrian mountains wild ;  
The many fountains that well wandering down  
Plinlimmon's huge round side their murmurs smooth  
Float round him ; Idris, that like warrior old  
His batter'd and fantastic helmet rears, 5  
Scattering the elements wrath, frowns o'er his way  
A broad irregular duskiness. Aloof  
Snowdon, the triple-headed giant, soars,  
Clouds rolling half way down his rugged sides.

Slow as he trod amid their dizzy heights, 10  
Their silences and dimly mingling sounds,  
Rushing of torrents, roar of prison'd winds ;  
O'er all his wounded soul flow'd strength, and pride,  
And hardihood ; again his front soar'd up

To commerce with the skies, and frank and bold 15  
His majesty of step his rugged path  
Imprinted. So in old poetic faith  
Hyperion from his native Delian bowers,  
'Mid the rich music of those sisters nine,  
Walk'd the bright heights of Helicon, and shook 20  
His forehead's clustering glories wide, and flush'd  
The smoothness of his fair immortal face  
With purple Godhead. Whence, ye mountains, whence  
The spirit that within your secret caves  
Holds kindred with man's soul? Is't that your pomp 25  
Of exaltation, your ærial crowns  
In their heaven-scaling rivalry cast forth  
Bold sympathies of loftiness, and scorn  
Contagious? or in that your purer air,  
Where fresh and virgin from its golden fount, 30  
Lies the fine light at morning, or at eve  
Melts upward and resolves itself from earth,  
And with its last clear trembling round ye clings:  
'The soul, unwound its coarse material chains,  
Basks in its own divinity, and feels 35  
There in the verge and portal of the heavens,

The neighbourhood of brighter worlds unseen ?  
Where the blue Glasslyn hurries her fleet course  
To wanton on the yellow level sands,  
On either side in sheer ascent abrupt 40  
The rocks, like barriers that in elder time  
Wall'd the huge cities of the Anakim,  
Upblacken to the sky, whose tender blue  
With mild relief salutes th' o'erlabour'd sight.  
There on the scanty slippery way, that winds 45  
With the stream's windings, Samor loiters on.  
But who art thou, that in the Avenger's path  
Standest in dark serenity ? what joy  
Instinct amid thy thick black locks reveals  
The full voluptuous quietude within ? 50  
Oh, Prophet ! in thy wanderings wide and far  
Amid the pregnant hours of future time,  
Haply the form of Samor, disarray'd  
Calamity's sad vesture, hath appear'd  
In plenitude of glory. Hence thine eye 55  
With recognition glad and bright salutes  
The Man of Fate. To earth that Prophet old  
Bow'd down, then look'd he on the waters dark,



Then upward to the mountains. “Stony earth,  
Within thy secret bosom feel’st not thou 60  
A wonderous presence? dwells not, thou blue stream,  
Under thy depth of waves a silent awe?—  
Yea, Snowdon, lift thou up in sternest pride  
Thy cloudy mantled brow; ye know him all,  
Ye know the Avenger.”—“Merlin mock not thou 65  
Thy fellow creature of the dust, the child  
Of sin and sorrow, with o’erlabour’d phrase,  
Abasing the immortal elements  
From their high calm indifference to sense  
Of our light motions. Simple truth severe 70  
Best seemeth aged lips; oh, holy famed  
And sage, how ill strong Wisdom’s voice melts down  
To the faint chime of flattery.”—“Poor of pride!  
Feeble of hope! thou seest thyself forlorn,  
An hunted wanderer in thy native land. 75  
I see thee clad in victory and revenge,  
Thy glory sailing wide on all the winds,  
Beautiful with thy blessings at thy feet  
Thy own fair Britain, Fate so freely spreads,  
Her mystic volume to my sight.”—“Oh, blind. 80

And ignorant as blind our insect race !  
The mole would count the sunbeams, the blind worm  
Search the hid jewels in the depths of earth,  
And man, dim dreamer, would invade the heavens,  
Self-seated in the Almighty's councils read 85  
The secrets of Omniscience, yea, with gaze  
Familiar scrutinize the Inscrutable.  
I tell thee, Merlin, that the soul of man  
Is destiny on earth ! God gave us limbs  
To execute, and intellect to will 90  
Or good or evil, and his unseen Spirit  
Our appetites of holiness, else faint  
And wavering doth corroborate : hence man's prides,  
Man's glories, and man's virtues all are God's.  
If yet this heart unwearied may bear on, 95  
Nor from its holy purpose faintly swerve,  
The Lord be prais'd, its fate is pride and joy.  
But if, and oh the peril ! it play false  
Its country's lofty hazard, shall it shift  
On wayward destiny its sloth and sin ? 100  
Evil is not, where man no evil wills,  
And good is not, where will not man and God."

“ Chief wise as brave, as to our feeble sight  
Yon pebble’s slight circumference, the Past,  
The Present, and the future of this world 105  
Are to the All-seeing vision ; oft doth Heaven  
In sign and symbol duskily reveal  
The unborn future ; oft Fate’s chariot wheels  
Are harbinger’d by voices that proclaim  
The fashion of their coming ; gifted Seers 110  
Feel on their lips articulate the deeds  
Of later days, and dim oracular sights  
Crowd the weak eyes, till pall’d attention faint  
To dizziness.”—“ Oh, Merlin, time hath been  
When in the guilty cities the Lord’s voice 115  
Hath spoken by his Prophets, hath made quail  
By apparitions ominous and dire  
Strong empires on their unassail’d height.  
But oh, for us of this devoted isle,  
Drench’d with the vials of Almighty wrath, 120  
To gaze up, and beseech the clouds to rain  
Bright miracles on this poor speck of earth.”

“ Shame choke thy speech, despondent slanderer ! thee  
Avenger ! this from thee ! Away ! my lips

Burn with the fire of heaven, my heart flows o'er 125  
With gladness and with glory. Peerless Isle,  
How dost thou sit amid thy blue domain  
Of ocean like a sceptred Queen ! The bonds  
Like flax have wither'd from thy comely limbs.  
Thou, the strong freedom of thy untam'd locks 130  
Shaking abroad, adornest God's fair world.  
Thou noblest Eden of man's fallen state,  
Apart and sever'd from the common earth,  
Even like a precious jewel, deep and far  
In the abyss of time thy dawn of pride 135  
Still with a fuller and more constant blaze  
Grows to its broad meridian, and Time's rolls  
Are silent of thy setting. Oh, how fair  
The steps of freemen in thy vales of peace ;  
Thy broad towns teem with wealth, thy yellow fields  
Laugh in their full fertility ; thy bays 141  
Whiten and glisten with thy myriad barks.  
The Angels love thee, and the airs of heaven  
Are gladden'd by thy holy hymns, while Faith  
Sits on thy altars, like a nestling dove, 145  
In unattainted snowyness of plume."



“ Now, by my soul, thou strange and solemn Man,  
Mistrust thee more I dare not; be't a dream  
Or revelation of immortal truth,  
Of Britain's fame I cannot choose but hear 150  
With a child's transport.”—Then the Prophet shook  
The dark profusion of his swelling hair  
With a stern triumph; then his aged eye  
Grew restless with delight: his thin white hand  
Closing around the Baron's arm, lay there 155  
Like a hard glove of steel. He led him on,  
Till now the black and shaggy pass spread out  
To a green quiet valley, after named  
The Bed of Gelert, that too-faithful hound  
Slain fondly by his erring Lord: the stream 160  
Here curl'd more wanton, lightly wafting down  
The last thin golden leaves the alders dropt,  
Like fairy barges skimming the blue waves.  
That stream o'erpass'd, rightward their silent way  
Lay to the foot of Snowdon. Pause was none, 165  
They front the steep ascent, and upward wind  
A long, sheer, toilsome path, their footfalls struck  
Upon the black bare stillness, audible

As in thick forest the lone woodman's axe.  
'Twas strange, yet slack'd not that old reverend Man  
His upward step, as though the mountain air 171  
Were his peculiar element, still his breath  
Respir'd unlabouring, lively bounded on  
His limbs, late slow and tremulous. Three long hours,  
Now front to front upon that topmost peak, 175  
Erwydfa, sit they motionless, alone:  
As when two vultures on some broken tower,  
That beetles o'er a dismal battle field,  
In dark and greedy patience ruminat  
Their evening feast, a stillness as of sleep 180  
Heaves in their ruffled plumes, their deep bright eyes  
Half clos'd in languid rest ; so undisturb'd,  
So lofty, sate the Avenger and the Seer.  
The atmosphere, that palls our restless world,  
Lay coiling in its murky folds below : 185  
So in some regal theatre, when droops  
The unfolding curtain, and within it shrouds  
The high disastrous passions, crimes, and woes  
Erewhile that fretted on its pomp of scene ;  
Thus Earth, with all its solemn tragedies, 190

Heroic vauntings, sumptuous imagings,  
Set in its veil of darkness from their sight.  
The filmless, the pellucid heaven above  
One broad pure sheet of sunlight.—“ Gifted Man,  
(Cried Samor,) wherefore to this desolate  
Untrodden ! ” — “ Ha ! untrodden ! know ye not,  
Where coarse humanity defiles not, there  
The snowy-footed Angels lightly skim  
The taintless soil, the fragrance of their plumes  
Fans the pure air where chokes no breath of sin  
The limpid current ? Desolate ! the motes  
That flicker in the sun are few and rare  
To the immortal faces that smile down  
Exquisite transport on the ravish'd sense.  
Here, from their kindred elements, emanate  
The festive creatures of the heavenly fields,  
Glories, and Mercies, and Beatitudes  
Some dropping on the silent summer dews,  
Some trembling on the rainbow's violet verge,  
Some rarely charioteering on the wings  
Of the mild winds, in moonlight some. Why shakes  
The Man of Vengeance ? wherefore of mine hand

This passionate wringing?"—"Tell me, truly tell;  
The name of Emeric, from some mild-lipp'd tone  
Hath it e'er trembled on thine ear? Old Man, 215  
Is't sin to say her presence might adorn  
That gentle company?"—"To souls like thine,  
Warrior, Heaven grants sweet intercourse and free  
With its beatified."—"Ah, now thou rak'st  
The ashes of a buried grief: gone all, 220  
My gentle visitations broken off,  
My delicate discourings silent, ceas'd!  
Oh, I talk idly, Prophet, speak thou on."

"Aye, Warrior, and of mild and soft no more;  
Grandeurs there are, to which the gates of heaven 225  
Set wide their burnish'd portals: midnight feels  
Cherubic splendours ranging her dun gloom,  
The tempests are ennobled by the state  
Of high seraphic motion. I have seen,  
I, Merlin, have beheld. It stood in light, 230  
It spake in sounds for earth's gross winds too pure.  
Between the midnight and the morn 'twas here  
I lay, I know not if I slept or woke,  
Yet mine eyes saw. Long, long this heart had yearn'd,



'Mid those rich passings and majestic shows 235

For shape distinct, and palpable clear sound.

It burst at length, yea, front to front it stood,

The Immortal Presence. I clench'd up the dust

In the agony and rapture of my fear,

And my soul wept with terror and deep joy. 240

It stood upon the winds, an Angel plumed,

And mail'd and crown'd; his plumes cast forth a tinge

Like blood on th' air around: his arms, in shape

Ethereal panoply complete, in hue

The moonlight on the dark Llanberis lake, 245

A bright blue rippling glitter; for the crown,

Palm leaves of orient light his brow enwreath'd,

That bloom'd in fair divinity of wrath,

And beautiful relentlessness austere.

Knowledge was in my heart, and on my lips; 250

I felt him, who he was.—“ Archangel! hail,

Destroyer! art not thou God's Delegate,

To break the glassy glories of this world?

The gem-knosp'd diadem, the ivory ball,

Sceptre and sword, imperial mantle broad, 255

The Lord of Nations, Thundershaft of war,

Are glorious on the pale submissive earth :  
Thou com'st, and lo, for throne, for sword, for king,  
Bare ashes and thin dust. Thou art, that aye  
The rich-tower'd cities smoulder'st to pale heaps 260  
Of lazy moss-stones, and aye after thee  
Hoots Desolation like a dank-wing'd owl  
Upon the marble palaces of Kings.  
Thou wert, when old Assyrian Nineveh  
Sank to a pool of waters, waste and foul ; 265  
Thou, when the Median's brow the massy tiar  
Let fall, and when the Grecian's brazen throne  
Sever'd and split to the four winds ; and now  
Consummatest thy work of wreck and scorn,  
Even on Rome's Cæsars, making the earth sick 270  
Of its own hollowness. Archangel ! Hail,  
Vicegerent of destruction ! Cupbearer,  
That pour'st the bitter liquor of Heaven's wrath,  
A lamentable homage pay I thee,  
And sue thee tell if Britain's days are full, 275  
Her lips for thy sad beverage ripe. Thereat  
Earthward his sunny spear its lurid point  
Declin'd, and lo, a White Horse, through the land

Ranging in stately speed; our city gates  
Shrunk open at his coming, our fair fields 280  
Wither'd before him, so his fiery breath  
Flar'd broad amazement through the gasping land.  
Triumph was in the trampling of his feet,  
And the strong joy of mockery, for he trod  
On broken principalities; his mane 285  
Familiar Conquest, as a rushing wind,  
Fann'd in loose brilliant streamings."—"False-lipp'd Seer,  
Thou spak'st of gladness, and thy ominous tone  
Is darkness and dismay."—"Hark, Warrior, hark:  
That wanton mane was trail'd down to the dust, 290  
That fiery trampling falter'd to dull dread,  
That pale victorious steed Thee, Thee I saw,  
Visible as thou stand'st, with mastering arm  
Drag down, and on his strong and baffled neck  
Full trod thy iron-sandal'd heel. The sight 295  
Was wine unto my soul, and I laugh'd out,  
And mock'd the ruinous Seraph in the clouds.

"Yet stood he in the quiet of his wrath,  
Angelic Expectation, that awaits  
Calmly till God accomplish God's high will, 300

Full on his brow. Then stoop'd the spear again,  
And lo, Seven Steeds, like that pale One, bestrode  
The patient Isle, and they that on them rode  
Wore diadem and regal pall ; then rose  
To war against those royal riders fierce, 305  
From a round table, Knights in sunlike arms,  
Shields bossy with rich impress quaint, and fair  
Their coursers, as the fire-hoof'd steeds of Morn.  
To white-arm'd Ladies in a stately court  
Bards hymn'd the deeds of that fine chivalry, 310  
And their crown'd Captain's title smote mine ear,  
' Arthur of Bretagne.'—Years went rolling on,  
Cloudy, discordant, and tempestuous years,  
For the sword reap'd the harvest of the land,  
And battle was the may-game of her sons. 315  
And lo, a Raven o'er the Eastern sea  
Swoop'd desolation on the Isle ; her wings  
Blasted wheree'er they wav'd, the earth wept blood  
In her foul talons gripe. But he that rode  
On the White Steed, the Sovereign of the Land, 320  
(Patience, Avenger, patience !) fair was he  
That Sovereign, as the virgin's spring-tide dream,



Holy as new anointed Christian Priest,  
Valiant as warrior burnish'd for the fight,  
Fond and extatic, as love-dreaming Bard, 325  
Solemn and wise, as old Philosopher,  
Stately as kingborn lion in the wood ;  
As he his fine face heavenward turn'd in prayer,  
The Angels bent down from their throning clouds,  
To wonder at that admirable King, 330  
Sky-wandering voices peal'd in transport out—  
' Alfred !' the baffled Raven cower'd aloof,  
The isle look'd up to heaven in peace and joy.

“ Still stood he there, betwixt me and the sun,  
Th' Archangel ; not in sleep, nor senselessness 335  
Absorb'd, but terrible inaction spread  
Over his innate menace. Oh, I strove,  
Yet dared not hope the dregs of wrath were drain'd,  
The mission of dismay fulfill'd and done ;  
Yet had those wings of fatal hue droop'd down 340  
In folded motionlessness, wreathy light  
Had crept and wound around that dusky spear,  
Silvering its perilous darkness. Dropt at once  
That tender light away ; at once those wings  
Started asunder, and spread wide and red 345

The rain of desolation, thicker roll'd  
The pedestal of clouds whereon he stood,  
As to bear up the effort of his wrath.  
Again the Eastern Raven snuff'd our air,  
The frantic White Horse laved his hoofs in blood, 350  
Till from the Southern Continent sprung forth  
A Leopard, on the ocean shore he ramp'd.  
Woe to the White Horse, to the Raven woe,  
Woe for the title of the Leopard Lord,  
The Conqueror ! and a Bell I heard, that sway'd 355  
Along the isle, and froze it into peace  
With its majestic tyranny of sound.

“ But he, upon the air, th' Archangel, he,  
The summons of whose eye from climes remote  
Beckon'd those grisly ministers of wrath, 360  
Northward he look'd, no northern ruin came.  
To th' East, there all was still. The South, nor shape  
Nor sound. The West, calm stretch'd th' unruffled sea.  
Ha ! thought I, earth hath now no ruin more,  
The race of havoc is extinct for us, 665  
Angel of wreck away ! thy task is o'er ;  
Majestic Mischief, from our isle away !  
He went not ; as an earthquake's second shock,

With dreary longing watch'd I what might come;  
Moments were years; and lo, the Island's sons 370  
Nor Briton they, nor Saxon, nor the stock  
Of those new comers, but from each had flow'd  
All qualities of honour and renown,  
'The foul dishonest dregs had fum'd away,  
And the rich quintessence, unmix'd, unsoil'd, 375  
An harmony of energies sublime,  
Knit in that high-brow'd people. Courtesy,  
Death-scorning valour, Fame's immortal thirst,  
And honour inbreath'd like the life of life.

Then rose that strong Archangel, and he smote 380  
The bosom of the land; at once leap'd up  
That mighty people. Here a Snow-white Rose,  
And there a Red, with fatal blossoming,  
And deadly fragrance, maddening all the land.  
I heard, I saw—ah, impious sights and sounds! 385  
Two war-cries in one tongue, two banner-rolls  
Wov'n in one loom, two lances from one forge,  
'Two children from one womb in conflict met;  
'Gainst brother brother's blood cried out to heaven,  
And he that rent the vizor of his foe, 390

Look'd through the shatter'd bars, and saw his son.

Ha, Britain! in thine entrails dost thou flesh

Thy ravine! thy Baronial castles blaze

With firebrands from their hospitable hearths.

“Mercy,” I cried aloud, “thou Merciless! 395

Destroy no more, Destroyer! Prone I fell,

And hid mine aching eyes deep in the dust;

So from my rocking memory to shut out

Those wars unnatural. Pass'd a sound at length

As of a Wild Boar hunted to his death; 400

I rais'd mine head, still there the Archangel stood;

Another pause, another gleam of hope;

But in that quiet interval me-seem'd

Trumpetings as of victory from the sea,

Flow'd o'er the Isle, and glories beam'd abroad 405

From a triumphant throne, where sate elate

A Virgin: all around her Poets harps

Strew'd flowers of amaranth blooming; and methought

Was joy and solemn welcoming in heaven

Of a pure incense, that from all the Isle 410

Soar'd to the unapproach'd throne of God.

“Then saw I through the Isle, a River broad



And full, and they that drank thereof look'd up  
Like children dropt forth from a nobler world,  
So powerful that proud water work'd within, 415  
Freshening the body and the soul: and each  
Beauty array'd and a frank simple strength.  
The river's name was Freedom: her fair tide  
So pleasant thrall'd mine eye, I saw not rise  
Th' Archangel's spear: th' earth's reeling woke me then,  
For lo, upon a throne, a gallant Prince, 421  
That with misguided sceptre strove to check  
That powerful stream: whereat the rebel tide  
Swell'd up with indignation, and aloof  
Stood gathering its high-crested waves; down came 425  
The deluge, that fair throne, and all its strong  
Nobility of pillars, with a crash  
Came to the earth, while they that drank rush'd out  
Inebriate with excess of that fierce stream,  
And cast a bloody sacrifice, that head 430  
Endiadem'd with royalty, to glut  
The tide implacable. 'Tis sad to hear,  
Aye Samor, what was it to see! Brave Chief,  
Cold winter leads the pleasant summer on,

The night must darken ere the morning dawn ; 435  
The summer came, the morning dawn'd, I saw  
The arch'd heavens open o'er the angelic shape,  
And upward like a cloud he mingled in  
To the sky's cloudiness. I cried aloud  
' For ever !' the close settling in the heaven 440  
Seem'd to reply ' For ever.' Not with him  
Pass'd off my vision fair. Another throne  
Stood by the venturous margin of that stream ;  
Then merriment, and loose-harp'd wantonness  
Smooth'd the late ruffled air ; immodest tones, 445  
To which fair forms in dancing motion swam :  
They paus'd, then dark around that throne it seem'd,  
Whereat those holy hymns that scarce had ceas'd  
To float up in their airy-winged course,  
In faintness 'gan to tremble and break off ; 450  
That stream again upgather'd its wak'd wrath,  
And foamy menace. When behold, a fleet  
Came tilting o'er the ocean waves, and cast  
A Lady and a Warrior on the shore,  
And kingly crowns around their brows august 455  
Out blossom'd ; on the throne they took their seat,

Soar'd gladness on the wings of those pure hymns,  
And the majestic stream in sunlight flow  
And full rejoicing murmur, all its waves  
Wafted around the high and steady throne. 460

Now listen with thy soul, not with thine ears,  
Briton ! beside that stream a Tree sprang out,  
With ever-mounting height, and amplitude  
Aye-spreading ; deep in earth its gnarled roots  
Struck down, as though to strengthen this frail world :  
Its crown amid the clouds seem'd soaring up 466  
For calm above earth's tossing and rude stir,  
And its broad branching spread so wide, its shade  
Lay upon distant realms ; one golden bright,  
Close by the cradle of the infant sun, 470  
And others in new western worlds remote ;  
And from that mystic river, Freedom, flow'd  
A moisture like the sap of life, that fed  
And fertilized the spacious Tree ; the gales  
Of ocean with a gorgeous freshness flush'd 475  
The beauty of its foliage. Blossoms rare  
Were on it ; holy deeds, that in the airs  
Of heaven delicious smelt, and fruits on earth

Shower'd from it, making its sad visage smile,  
For life and hope and bliss was in their taste. 480  
Amid the state of boughs twin Eagles hung  
Their eyries, Victory and Renown, and swung  
In rapturous sport with the tumultuous winds,  
But birds obscene, Dishonour, Shame, Dismay,  
Scar'd by the light of the bright leaves, aloof 485  
Far wheel'd their sullen flight, nor dar'd to stoop.  
I saw the nations graft their wasted trunks  
From those broad boughs of beauty and of strength,  
And dip their drain'd urns in that sacred stream.  
But in the deep peculiar shade there stood 490  
A Throne, an Altar, and a Senate-house.  
Upon the throne a King sate, triple-crown'd  
As by three kingdoms ; voices eloquent  
In harmony of discord fulmin'd forth  
From that wise Senate : in swift intercourse 495  
To and fro from heaven's crystal battlements  
To that pure altar Angels stoop'd their flight.  
And through the sunny boughs Philosophers  
Held commerce with the skies, and drew from thence  
The stars to suffer their sage scrutiny ; 500



And Poets sent up through the bowery vault  
Such lavish harmonies, the charm'd air seem'd  
Forgetful of its twinkling motion dim.

“ Oh, admirable Tree ! thou shalt not fall  
By foreign axe, or slow decay within ! 505  
The tempests strengthen thee, the summer airs  
Corrupt not, but adorn. Until that tide,  
Freedom, the Inexhaustible, exhaust,  
Lives thy coeval Immortality.”

The Prophet ceas'd : still Samor on his face, 510  
That in solemnity of firm appeal  
Look'd heavenward, with a passionate belief  
Gaz'd, and a glad abandonment. “ Ha, Seer,  
But now when thou beganst 'twas noon of day,  
And now deep night. Yea, Merlin, and by night 515  
The Tamer of the White Steed must go forge  
His iron curb.” Forth like a cataract  
He burst, and bounded down the mountain side.  
“ Yet once again, tumultuous world, I plunge  
Amid thy mad abyss ; thou proud and fierce, 520  
I come to break and tame thee ! see ye not,  
Wise Hengist ! strong Caswallon ! how the sand

Is under your high towering thrones, the worm  
Is in your showy palms."—And then a pause  
Of tumult and proud trembling in his soul, 525  
And, "False it was not, but a gleam vouchsaf'd  
From the eternal orb of truth, the sense  
That inbred and ingrain'd with my soul's life,  
Hath made of Britain to this leaping heart.  
A sound not merely of deep love, but pride 530  
Intense, and inborn majesty. I feel,  
And from my earliest consciousness have felt,  
That in the wide hereafter, where old Fate  
Broods o'er the unravelling web of human things,  
Wov'n by the Almighty, spreads thy tissue broad 535  
In light, among the dark and mazy threads;  
Vicissitude or mutability  
Quench not its desolate lustre, on it winds  
Unbroken, unattainted, unobscur'd."—

So pass'd he, who had seen, him then had deem'd, 540  
By the proud steedlike tossing of his crest,  
His motion like the uncheck'd August sun  
Travelling the cloudless vacancy of air,  
A monarch for his summer pastime gone

Into the shady grove, with courtier train, 545  
And plumed steed, and laden sumpter mule,  
Cool canopy, and velvet carpeting.  
But he beneath the sleety winter sky,  
Even his hard arms bit into by the keen  
And searching airs, houseless, by hazard found 550  
His coarse irregular fare, his drink, the ice  
Toilsomely broken from the stiff black pool.  
The furr'd wolf in the mossy oaken trunk  
Lapp'd himself from the beating snow, but on  
Went Samor with unshivering naked foot ; 555  
The tempest from the mountain side tore down  
The pine, like a scath'd trophy casting it  
To moulder in the vale, but Samor's brow  
Fronted the rude sky ; the free torrent felt  
The ice its rushing turbulence o'ergrow, 560  
Translucent in its cold captivity  
It hung, but Samor burst the invading frost  
From the untamed waters of his soul, and flow'd  
Fetterless on his deep unfathom'd course.

And thou, wild Deva, how hast thou forgone 565  
Thy summer music, and thy sunny play

Of eddies whitening 'mid thy channel stones ;  
Bard-belov'd river, on whose green-fring'd brink  
The fine imagining Grecian sure had feign'd  
'Twixt thy smooth Naiads and the Sylvens rude 570  
Of thy gray woods stol'n amorous intercourse ;  
With such a slow reluctance thou delay'st  
Under the dipping branches, that flap up  
With every shifting motion of the wind,  
Thy limpid moisture, and with serpent coil 575  
Dost seem as thou would'st mingle with thyself  
To wander o'er again the same lov'd course.  
Now lies thy ice-bound bosom mute and flat  
As marble pavement, thy o'ershadowing woods  
One bare, brown leaflessness, that faintly drop 580  
At intervals the heavy icicles,  
Like tears upon a monumental stone.  
But though thy merry waters and brisk leaves  
Are silent, with their close-couch'd birds of song,  
Even in this blank dead season music loves 585  
Thy banks, and sounds harmonious must be heard  
Even o'er thy frozen waters. 'Twas an hymn  
From a low chapel by the river side,



Came struggling through the thick and hazy air,  
And made a gushing as of tears flow o'er 590  
The Wanderer's soul; the form winds could not bow  
Nor crazing tempests, those soft sounds amate;  
Those dews of music melt into the frame  
Of adamant, proof against the parching frost.

Under the porch he glided in, and knelt 595  
Unnotic'd in the throng: whose motion sway'd  
The beasts of ravine, he before his God  
Wore nought distinctive, save of those bruis'd reeds,  
Was he the sorest bruis'd, and deepest seem'd  
The full devotion settling round his heart. 600  
More musical than the music on that soul,  
So long inured to things tumultuous, sights  
Rugged and strange, and hurrying and distract,  
Came the sensation of a face belov'd.  
The calm of that old reverend brow, the glow 605  
Of its thin silver locks, was like a flash  
Of sunlight in the pauses of a storm.  
Now hath the white-stol'd Bishop lifted up  
His arms, his parting benison descends  
Like summer rain upon his flock. Whose ear, 610

Oh, holy Germain, felt thy gentle tones  
As Samor's? ah, when last thy saintly brow  
For him look'd heavenward, and less tremulous then  
Thy voice on him breath'd blessing, 'twas in times  
Far brighter, at that jocund bridal hour 615  
When Emeric, rosy between shame and joy,  
Stood with him by the altar side:—" Thus live  
In love till life's departure ;"—Such thy prayer,  
Ah, words how vain ! sweet blessings unenjoy'd !

The throng hath parted ; in the House of God 620  
Still knelt the armed man ; with pressure strong  
He clasp'd old Germain's hand—" Good Bishop, thou  
Art skill'd in balancing our earthly sins,  
I was a man, whose high ambitious head  
Was among God's bright stars ; I deem'd of earth, 625  
As of a place whose dust my feet shook off  
With an heaven-gifted scorn, so far, so high  
Seem'd I above its tainting elevate,  
At midnight, on my slumber came the sin,  
I will not say how exquisite and fair, 630  
Mine eyelids sprung apart to drink it in,  
My soul leap'd up to clasp it, and the folds

Of passion, like a fiery robe, wrapt in  
My nature ; I had fall'n, but bounteous Heaven  
Of its most blest permitted one t' extend 635  
A snow-white arm of rescue."—"The hot tears  
Corrode and fret the warrior's brazen helm ;  
I will not ask thee if thine outward eyes,  
Hath thy soul wept?"—"Aye, Bishop, tears of blood ;  
Sorrow and shame weigh'd down my nerveless arm, 640  
And clipp'd th' aspiring plumage of my soul ;  
From out mine own heart scorn hiss'd at me."—"Well,  
Strong Man of arms, hast fought the inward fight,  
And God remit thy sins, as I remit."—

"Then take thou to thine arms thy ancient friend." 645  
So saying, uprose Samor, like a star  
Out of the ocean, shining his bright face  
With the pure dews of penitence. But he,  
The old man, fell upon his neck and wept,  
As though th' endearing name, my Son, were voic'd 650  
By nature, not by saintly use, a sound  
Not of the lips, but th' overflowing heart.

Their's was a broken conference, drear thoughts  
Of anguish, desolation, and despair,

So moulded up with recollections sweet, 655  
They made the sunken visage smile through tears ;  
A few fair roses shed on a brown heath,  
A little honey in deep cups of gall :  
Light bridal airs broke in upon by sounds  
Funereal, shouts of triumph languishing 660  
To the faint shriek of agony, direness forc'd  
Into the fresh bowers of delight, and death,  
Th' unjoyous, in the laughing feast of joy.

'Tis th' one poor luxury the wretched have  
To speak of wretchedness—yet brief their speech, 665  
“ Vengeance and vigilance,” the stern adieu  
Even in that hoary Bishop's ear, he went.

But by the Bishop's side, just there where knelt  
Th' Avenger, a new form : 'twas man in garb,  
But the thin fringing of the humid eye, 670  
The delicate wanderings of the rosy veins,  
The round full alabaster of the skin,  
The briefness of the modest sliding step,  
Something of womanly composure smooth,  
Even in the close and girt habiliments, 675  
Belied the stern appearance.—“ Priest, with him



But now who parted, is my soul allied  
In secret, close society ; his faith  
Must be my faith, his God my God."—" Fair youth,  
I question not by what imperious tie 680  
Of admiration or strong love thou'rt led ;  
For as the Heavens with silent power intense  
Draw upward the light mists and fogs of earth,  
And steeping them in glory, hang them forth  
Fresh, renovate, and radiant ; virtue holds 685  
The like attractive influence, to her trains  
Souls light and clayey-tinctur'd, till they catch  
The fair contagion of her beauty, beam  
With her imparted light. Hear, heathen youth,  
Hear and believe."—As when beneath the nave 690  
Tall arching, the Cathedral organ 'gins  
Its prelude, lingeringly exquisite  
Within retir'd the bashful sweetness dwells,  
Anon like sunlight, or the floodgate rush  
Of waters, bursts it forth, clear, solemn, full ; 695  
It breaks upon the mazy fretted roof,  
It coils up round the clustering pillars tall,  
It leaps into the cell-like chapels, strikes

Beneath the pavement sepulchres, at once  
The living temple is instinct, ablaze 700  
With the uncontrolled exuberance of sound.  
Even so with smoothing gentleness began  
The mitred Preacher, winning audience close :  
Till rising up, the rapid argument  
Soar'd to the Empyrean, linking earth 705  
With heaven by golden chains of eloquence ;  
Till the mind, all its faculties and powers  
Lay floating, self-surrender'd in the deep  
Of admiration. Wondrous 'twas to see,  
With the transitions of the Holy Creed, 710  
The workings of that regular bright face :  
Now ashy blank, now glittering bright, now dew'd  
With fast sad tears, now with a weeping smile,  
Now heavy with droop'd eyelids, open now  
With forehead arch'd in rapture ; 'till at last 715  
Ensued a gasping listening without breath.  
But as the voice severe wound up the strain,  
And from the heavenly history to enforce  
The everlasting moral, 'gan extort  
From the noviciate in the jealous faith 720

Passionless purity, and life sincere  
From all the soft indulgences of sin ;  
Forbidden in the secret heart to shrine  
A dear unlawful image, to reserve  
A sad and narrow sanctuary for desire: 725  
Then stood in speechlessness, yet suppliant,  
With snowy arms outstretch'd, and quivering loose,  
The veiling mantle thrown in anguish back,  
Confest the Woman: starting from their band,  
Like golden waters o'er a marble bed, 730  
Flow'd out her long locks o'er her half-bare neck.

“ To tell me that in such cold solemn tones,  
All, all unwelcome, bitter as it is,  
I must believe, for its oppressive truth  
Loads on my soul, and he believes it all. 735  
To tell it me here, here, where all around  
Linger his vestiges, where the warm air  
Yet hath the motion of his breath, the sound  
Of his departing footsteps beating yet  
Upon my heart. Long sought ! and found in vain ! 740  
In sunshine have I sought thee and in shade,  
O'er mountain have I track'd thee, and through vale,

The clouds have wrapp'd thee, but I lost thee not,  
The torrents drown'd thy track, but not from me,  
I dared not meet thee, but I sought thee still ; 745  
To me forbid, alone to me, what all  
The coarse and common things of nature may ;  
The airs of heaven may touch thee, I may not,  
All human eyes behold thee—all but mine ;  
And thou, the senseless, enviable dust : 750  
May'st cherish the round traces of his limbs,  
His fresh fair image must away from me.  
Oh, that I were the dust whereon thou tread'st,  
Even though I felt thee not !"—And is this she,  
The Virgin of the festal hall, who won 755  
A kingdom for a smile, nor deign'd regard  
Its winning, and who stoop'd to be a Queen ?  
And is this she, whose coming on the earth  
Was like the Morn in her impearled car,  
Loftiest or loveliest which, 'twere bold to say ? 760  
She whose enamouring scorn fell luxury-like  
On her beholders, who seem'd glad to shrink  
Beneath the wreath'd contempt of her full lip ?  
This she, the Lady of the summer bark,



To whom the sunshine and the airs, and all 765  
Th' inconstant waters play'd the courtier smooth,  
That cast a human feeling of delight  
At her bewitching presence o'er the blind  
Unconscious forms of nature? Is this she!  
Those rich lips, for a monarch's banquet meet, 770  
Visiting the dust with frantic kiss, thus low,  
Thus desolate, thus fallen, of her fall  
Careless, so deep in shame, yet unasham'd!

But thou, Heaven reconcil'd, on earth the seal'd,  
The anointed by the prophet's gladdening oils, 775  
God's instrument, hath midnight now resum'd  
Its spirit-wafting function? Emeric, she  
On earth so mild, in her had anger seem'd  
Unnatural as a war-song on a lute,  
As blood upon the pinion of a dove. 780  
In heaven hath she her heavenly qualities  
Unlearnt? is she the angel now in all  
But its best part, forgiveness? Can it be  
Th' ungentle North, the bleak and snowy air  
Estrange her now? those elements of earth 785  
But tyrannize beneath the moon, the stars

And spirits in their nature privileg'd  
From heat and cold, from severing and from frost,  
Their pure and constant temperament maintain,  
Glide through the storm serene, and rosy warm 790  
Rove the froze winter air. Are sounds abroad,  
That Samor from his mossy pillow, stretch'd  
Under the oak, uplifts his head, and then  
Like one bliss-overcome, subsides again?  
Half sleep, half sense he lies, his nuptial hymn, 795  
Articulate each gay and dancing word,  
Distinct each delicate and dwelling fall,  
Is somewhere in the air about him ; looks  
Are on him of a bashful eye, too fond  
To turn away, too timorous to fix 800  
And rest unwavering. All the marriage rite  
Is acting now anew ; the sunlight falls  
Upon the gold-clasp'd book of prayer, as then  
It fell, and Germain speaks as Germain spake ;  
And Emeric, on her clieek the tear is there, 805  
Where then it hung in lucid trembling bright ;  
The very fluttering of her yielded hand,  
When gliding up her finger small, the ring

Made her his own for ever, throbs again  
Upon his sensitive touch. He dares not move 810  
Lest he should break the lovely bubble frail,  
His tranc'd eyes stir not, lest they rove away  
From that delicious sight, his open hand  
Lies pulseless, lest the slightest change disturb  
That exquisite sensation, so he lies, 815  
Knowing all false, yet feeling all as true.

And it was false, yet why? that is indeed,  
Which is to sense and sight. Ah, well beseems  
Us, the strong insects of an April morn,  
Steady and constant as the thistle's down 820  
When winds are on it, lasting as the flake  
Of spring snow on the warm and grassy ground,  
Well beseems us, ourselves, our forms, our lives,  
The earth we tread on, and the air we breathe,  
The light and glassy peopling of a dream, 825  
T' arraign our visions for their perishing,  
And on their unreality to rail,  
Ungrateful to the illusion, that deceives  
To rapture, and unwise, to cast away  
Sweet flowers because they are not amaranth. 830

Thou, Samor, nor ungrateful nor unwise,  
That, 'scaping from this cold and dark below,  
Dost spread thee out for thy peculiar joy  
A land of fair imaginings, with shapes,  
And sounds, and motions, and sweet stillnesses, 835  
Dost give up all the moon beholds to woe  
And tumult, but in some far quiet sphere  
Findest thyself a pure companionship  
With spirits thou did'st love, and who lov'd thee  
While passionate and earthly sense was theirs. 840



## BOOK IX.

Who tracks the ship along the sea of storms?  
Who through the dark haste of the wintry clouds  
Pierceth to where the planet in retired  
And constant motion the blue arch of heaven  
Traverseth? Sometimes on the mountain top 5  
Of some huge wave the reappearing bark  
Takes its high stand with pennon fluttering far  
And cautious sail half furl'd, yet eminent  
As of th' assaulting element in disdain.  
Sometimes amid' the darkness falling off, 10  
And scattering from its crystal sphere away,  
Bursts out the argent orb refresh'd, and shews  
Its lamp unquenchable. Thou voyager  
'Mid the rude waves of desolation, Star  
Of Britain's gloomy night, so bafflest thou 15

My swift poetic vision ! now the waves  
Ride o'er thee, now the clouds devour thee up,  
And thou art lost to sight, and dare I say  
Lost to thy immortality of song.  
Thee too anon I see emerging proud 20  
From the dusk billows of calamity,  
That swoln and haughty from the recent wreck  
Of thy compatriot navy, thee assail  
With their accumulated weight of surge.  
Thou top'st some high-brow'd wave, and shaking off 25  
On either side their fury, brandishest  
Thy solitary banner. Thee I see,  
Within th' embosoming midnight of the land,  
On gliding with smooth motion undisturb'd,  
And through the glimpses of the breaking gloom, 30  
Sometimes a solemn beauty sheddest forth  
On the distemper'd face of human things.

Full in the centre of Caer Ebranc \* stood  
A temple, by the August Severus rear'd  
To Mavors the Implacable ; what time 35  
That Cæsar stoop'd his eagles on the wreck

\* York.

Of British freedom, when the mountaineer,  
The King of Morven, if old songs be sooth,  
Fingal, from Carun's bloody flashing waves \*  
Shook the fled Roman on his new-built wall ; 40  
And Ossian woke up on his hill of dreams,  
And spread the glory of his song abroad,  
To halo round his sceptred Hero's head.

But not the less his work of pride pursued  
Th' imperial Roman ; up the pillars rose, 45  
Slow lengthening out their long unbroken lines,  
In delicate solidity advanc'd,  
And stately grace toward the sky, till met  
By the light massiveness of roof, that sloped  
Down on their flowery capitals. Nor knew 50  
That man of purple and of diadem,  
The Universal Architect at work,  
Framing for him a narrow building dark,  
The grave's lone building. Th' emperor and his bones  
Into the blank of things forgot and past 55  
Had moulder'd, but this proud and 'during pile,  
By wild weeds overgrown, by yellow hues  
Of age deep tinted, still a triumph wrought

\* Gibbon, ch. vi.

O'er time, and Christian disregard, and stood  
As though to mock its Maker's perishing. 60

Upon the eastern pediment stood out  
A fierce relief, where the tumultuous stone  
Was nobly touch'd into a fit device  
For th' immortal Homicide within : it showed  
His coming on the earth ; the God had burst 65

The gates of Janus, that fell shattering back  
Behind him, from the wall the rearing steeds  
Sprung forth, and with their stony hoofs the air  
Insulted. Them Bellona urg'd, abroad  
Her snaky locks from her bare wrinkled brow 70

Went scattering ; forward th' haggard charioteer  
Lean'd, following to the coursers reeking flanks  
The furrowing scourge with all herself, and hung  
Over their backs half fury, and half joy,  
As though to listen to their bruising hoofs, 75

That trampled the thick massacre. Erect  
Behind, with shield drawn in and forward spear,  
The con'd helm finely shaped to th' arching brow,  
The God stood up within the car, that seem'd  
To rush whenever the fleet wind swept by. 80



His brow was glory, and his arm was power,  
And a smooth immortality of youth,  
Like freshness from Elysium newly left,  
Th' embalming of celestial airs inhal'd,  
Touch'd with a beauty to be shudder'd at 85  
His massy shape, a lightning-like fierce grace,  
That makes itself admir'd, whilst it destroys.

There on a throne, fronting the morning sun,  
Caswallon sate ; his sceptre a bright sword  
Unsheath'd ; with savage art had he broke up 90  
His helmet to the likeness of a crown,  
Thereon uncouthly set and clustering bright  
Rich jewels glitter'd ; to his people rang'd  
Upon the steps of marble sloping down,  
Barbaric justice minist'ring he sate, 95  
Expounding th' absolute law of his own will,  
And from the abject at his feet receiv'd  
Homage that seem'd like worship : not alone  
From his wild people, but from lips baptiz'd,  
Came titles that might make the patient Heavens 100  
Burst to the utterance of a laughing scorn ;  
Might wake up from the bosom of the grave,

A bitter and compassionate contempt,  
 To hear the inheritance of her dull worms,  
 Nam'd in his dauntless and unblushing style, 105

“Unconqu'able! Omnipotent! Supreme!”—

But all along the ranging column files,  
 And all abroad the turgid laudings spread,

“Unconqu'able! Omnipotent! Supreme!”

Yet he, the Stranger, whom Prince Malwyn leads, 110

He bows not, those hymn'd flatteries seem to jar

Upon his sense, so high his head he bears

Above them, like a man constrain'd to walk

Amid low tufts of poisonous herbs; he fronts

The monarch, and thus 'gins his taunting strain: 115

“Unconqu'able! whose conquering is the wolf's,

That when the shifting battle rages yet,

Steals to some desert corner of the field,

And riots on the spoils. Omnipotent!

Aye, as a passive weapon, wielded now, 120

Now cast away contemptuous for the dust

To canker and to rust around. Supreme!

O'er whom is Ruin on its vulture wings,

Scoffing the bubble whereupon thou rid'st,

And waiting Hengist's call to swoop and pierce 125  
And dissipate its swoln and airy pride.  
Whose diadem of glory, sword of power,  
Yea, breath of life, at Hengist's wayward will,  
Cling to thee, ready at his beck to fade,  
And shiver and expire."—"At Hengist's call! 130  
At Hengist's beck! at Hengist's!"—the word chok'd,  
With eyes that dug into the Stranger's face,  
Yet so by wrath bewilder'd, they had lost  
Distinction, rose Caswallon. From the wall  
A lance he seiz'd, huge as a pine-tree stem, 135  
That on Blencathara stands sheer 'gainst heaven's storms:  
Far o'er all heads a long and rapid flight  
It cut along the air, till almost fail'd  
The sight to track it to its ponderous fall.  
Then taking on his throne his quiet seat, 140  
"Back, back to Hengist, say my lance flies thus,  
Bid him o'ercast it, then come here again  
To menace at Caswallon."—"Soft and weak,  
(Pursued the unwondering Stranger) know'st thou not,  
There is a strength, that is not of the arm, 145  
Nor standeth in the muscles sinewy play?

It striketh, but its striking is unseen,  
It wieldeth, what it wieldeth seeming yet  
Sway'd by its own free motion. King, I say,  
Thou stepp'st not, speak'st not, but obedient still 150  
To Hengist's empire, thou'rt a dog that hunts  
But as thy master slips thee on his game,  
A bridled steed that vaunteth as his own  
His rider's prowess."—"Hah! I know thee now,  
Insolent outcast, Samor!"—"And I thee, 155  
Self-outcast, once a Briton—oh thou fall'n  
When most thou seem'st exalted, oh most base  
When most ennobled, a most pitiful slave  
When bearing thee most lordly! Briton once,  
Ay, every clod of earth that makes a part 160  
Of this isle's round, each leaf of every tree,  
And every wave of every streamlet brook,  
Should look upon thee with a mother's glance,  
And speak unto thee with a mother's voice.  
But thou, most impious and unnatural son, 165  
Hast sold thy mother to the shame and curse  
Of foreign lust, hast knit a league to rend  
And sever her, most proud if some torn limb



Be cast thee for thy lot."—Then rose again  
Caswallon, from his brow the crown took off, 170  
And placing it in Samor's hand—"I read  
Thy purpose, and there's fire in't, by my throne!  
Now, Samor, place that crown upon my head,  
Do me thy homage, kneeling, as thy king,  
And thou and I, we'll have a glorious tilt 175  
At these proud Saxons. Turn not off; may boys  
Gild their young javelins in Caswallon's blood,  
And women pluck me by the beard, if e'er  
On other terms I league with thee."—The crown  
Samor received, and Samor look'd to heaven, 180  
And Samor bow'd his knee,—“Almighty God,  
If thine eternal thunderbolts are yet  
Unweary of their function dire, if earth  
Yet, yet have not exhausted and consum'd  
Thy flame-wing'd armoury of wrath, reserve 185  
Some signal and particular revenge  
For this man's head: so this foul earth shall learn,  
Ere doomsday, that the sin, whose monstrous shape  
Doth most offend thy nice and sensitive sight,  
Is to bear arms against our native land. 190

Make thou of him a monumental ruin,  
To publish in the ages long remote,  
That sometimes is thy red right hand uplift  
Against the living guilty."—And to earth,  
Upleaping, Samor dash'd the crown ; the gems 195  
Lay starry on the pavement white. On high  
Caswallon the rear'd sword of justice swung,  
Heavy with death, above th' Avenger's head.  
But he—" Caswallon, hold thine hand, here, here  
'Thy warrant for my safety, by thy son 200  
A poniard given, upon his heart to wreak  
All evil done myself." With bosom bare  
Stood Malwyn by the Avenger's side. But he  
Viewing that downy skin empurpled o'er  
With youth's light colouring, and his constant mien, 205  
Cast down the dagger, and " Fall what fall may,  
Excellent boy, my hand shall still be white  
From blood of thine."—Like wild-boar in his rush  
Baffled, or torrent-check'd, Caswallon paus'd—  
" Now, Christian, where learnt thou the art to wrest 210  
My vengeance from me? Go, go, I may strike  
If the fit fire me.—By Andraste, boy,

Boy Malwyn, there's thy father in thy blood.  
Hah, Samor, thou hast 'scap'd me now, erewhile  
I'll make a footstool of thy neck, to mount 215  
On Britain's throne: alive or dead, I'll have  
A knee as supple, and a front as low  
From thee, as any of my milk-fed slaves:  
Go, go."—And Malwyn led the Avenger forth  
Along the dull and sleepy shore of Ouse, 220  
Till all Caer Ebranc's sounds flagg'd on his ear,  
And all its towers had dwindled from his sight.  
Ere parting, Malwyn clasp'd his hand, and tears  
Hung in his eyelids.—“ Oh, thou know'st not yet  
How Hengist sways my father's passive mind; 225  
My sister, my sweet Lilian, she whose sight  
Made mine eyes tremble, whom I've stol'n to see,  
Despite my father's stern command, asleep  
With parted lips, and snowy breathing skin,  
Scarce knew she me, her brother, her knew I 230  
So only that my spirit yearn'd to mix  
With hers in fondness, she, even she, the soft  
The innocent, a wolf had lov'd her, she  
Hath felt the drowning waters o'er her close,

Fair victim of an hellish sacrifice." 235

After a troubled silence, spake the Chief:

"Malwyn, my Christian pupil, God will give  
The lov'd on earth another meeting place;  
Adieu, remember, Vengeance, Vigilance."—

The spring had made an early effort faint, 240

'T' encroach upon the Winter's ancient reign;

And she had lur'd forth from the glittering earth

The snowdrop and pale cowslip, th' elder tree

And hawthorn their green buds shot out, yet fear'd

'T' entrust the rude air with their dainty folds. 245

A fresh green sparkled where the snow had been,

And here and there a bird on the bare spray

Warbled a timorous welcome, and the stream

Of Eamont, as rejoicing to be free,

Went laughing down its sunny silvering course. 250

The only wint'ry thing on Eamont's shore

Is human; powerless are the airs that touch

To breathing and to kindling the dead earth,

Powerless the dewy trembling of the sun,

To melt around the heart of Vortimer 255

The snow that flakes and curdles there—that bank,



That little bank of fair and cherish'd turf,  
Whereon his head reclines, ah, doth not rest !  
By its round swelling, likest were a grave,  
Save that 'twere brief and narrow for all else 260  
But fairy, or those slender watery shapes  
That dance beneath the stream. Yet there the Spring  
Hath dropp'd her first, her tenderest bloom ; the airs  
Find the first flowery odours on that spot ;  
Cowslip is there and primrose faint and pale, 265  
The daisy and the violet's blue eyes,  
Peeping from out the shaking grass. The step  
Of Samor wakens the pale slumberer there,  
He lifts his lean hands up, and parts away  
The matting hair from o'er his eyes, which look 270  
As though the painful sunlight wilder'd them,  
With stony stare that saw not. Save that lay  
A shepherd's wallet by his side, had seem'd  
That foot of man ne'er ventur'd here ; all sounds  
Were strange and foreign, save the pendant arms 275  
Swinging above with heavy knolling sound.  
But Samor's presence made a sudden break  
Upon his miserable flow of thought ;

He motion'd first with bony arm, then spake.

“ Away, away, thou'rt fearful, thou'lt disturb, 280

Away with thy arm'd head and iron heel,

She will not venture, while thy aspect fierce

Haunts hereabout, she cannot brook a sound,

Nor any thing that's rude, and dark, and harsh,

Nor any voice, nor any look but mine ; 285

She will not come up, if thou linger'st here ;

Hard and discourteous man, why seek to keep

My own, my buried from me ? why prevent

The smiling intercourse of those that love ? ” —

“ Sad man, what mean'st thou ? ” — “ Speak not, but

begone. 290

I tell thee, she's beneath, I laid her there,

And she'll come up to me, I know she will,

Trembling and slender, soft and rosy pale.

I know it, all things sound, and all things smile,

As when she wont to meet me.” — “ Woful youth, 295

The dead shall never rise but once.” — “ And why ?

The primrose that was dead, I saw it shed

Its leaves, and now again 'tis fresh and fair ;

The swallow, fled on gliding wing away,

Like a departing spirit, see it skims  
The waters ; the white dormouse, that went down  
Into its cave, hath been abroad ; the stream,  
That was so silent, hark ! its murmuring voice  
Is round about us ; Lilian too, to meet  
The voices and the breathing things she lov'd, 305  
Amid the sunshine and the springing joy  
Will rise again."—" Kind Heaven, I should have known,  
Though rust-embrown'd yon breast-plate, and yon helm,  
I should have known, though furrowy, sunk and wan,  
That face, though wreck'd and broken, that tall form ;  
Prince Vortimer ! in maiden or in child, 311  
Fancies so sick and wild had been most sad,  
But in a martial and renowned chief,  
Might teach a trick of pity to a fiend.  
Oh, much abus'd ! much injur'd, well, too well 315  
Hath that fell man the deed of evil wrought."—  
" Man, man ! then there is man, whose blood will flow,  
Whose flesh will quiver under the keen steel,  
Samor !"—And up he leap'd, as though he flung  
Like a dead load, the dreamy madness off. 320  
" Samor ! thou tranquil soul ! that walk'st abroad

With thy calm reason, and thy cloudless face  
Unchangeable, as a cold midnight star :  
Thou scarce wilt credit, I have found a joy  
In hurling stones down on that glassy tide, 325  
And with an angry and quick-dashing foot,  
Breaking the senseless smoothness, that methought  
Smiled wickedly upon me, and rejoic'd  
At its own guilt and my calamity.  
But oh, upon a thing that feels and bleeds, 330  
And shrieks and shudders, with avenging arm  
To spring ! Where is't and who ? good Samor tell."—  
And Samor told the tale, and thus—" Brave youth,  
Not only from yon narrow turf, come up  
From Britain's every hill, and glen, and plain, 335  
Deep voices that invoke thee, Vortimer,  
To waken from thy woful rest. Thy arm  
No selfish, close, and singular revenge  
Must nerve and freshen ; in thy country's cause,  
Not in thy own, that fury must be wreak'd." 340  
His answer was the brandishing his sword,  
Which he had rent down from th' o'erhanging bough,  
And the infuriate riot of his eye.



“ Oh, perilous your hazard,” still went on  
 Samor, “ ye foes of freedom, ye take off  
 Heaven’s bonds from all our fiercer part of man,  
 Ye legalize forbidden thoughts, the thirst  
 Of blood ye make a glory, give the hue  
 Of honour and self-admiration proud,  
 To passions murky, dark, unreconcil’d :  
 The stern and Pagan vengeance sanctify  
 T’ a Christian virtue, and our prayers, that mount  
 Unto the throne of God, though harshly toned  
 With imprecations, take their flight uncheck’d.”

But Vortimer upon the grassy bank  
 Had fall’n, “ Not long, sweet spirit, oh not long,  
 Shall violets be wanting on thy grave.”—

Yet unaccompanied the Avenger past,—  
 As though the wonted dark and solemn words,  
 “ Vengeance and Vigilance,” had fix’d him there,  
 Prince Vortimer remains by Eamont side.

Samor ! the cities hear thy lonely voice,  
 Thy lonely tread is in the quiet vale,  
 Thy lonely arm, amid his deep trench’d camp,  
 The Saxon hears upon some crashing helmet

Breaking in thunder and in death. But thee,  
Why see I thee by Severn side? what soft  
And indolent attraction wiles thee on,  
Even on this cold and gusty April day,  
To the sad desert of thy ancient home? 370  
Why mingle for thyself the wormwood cup?  
Why plunge into the fount of bitterness?  
Or why, with sad indulgence, pamper up,  
Wilful the moody sorrow, and relax  
Thy high-strung spirit? Oh, so near, no power, 375  
Hath he to pass from those old scenes away,  
He must go visit every spot belov'd,  
And think on joys, no more to be enjoy'd.

Ruin is there, but ruin slow and mild,  
The spider's wandering web is thin and gray 380  
On roof and wall, here clings the dusky bat,  
And, where his infants voices us'd to sound,  
The owlet's sullen flutter and dull chirp  
Come o'er him; on his hospitable hearth  
The blind worm and slow beetle crawl their round. 385  
Yet is no little, light, and trivial thing,  
Without its tender memory; first with kiss,

Long and apparent sweet, the primrose bed  
He visits, where that graceful girl is laid,  
Then roves he every chamber; eye, and ear,  
And soul, all full of her, that is not there:  
Emeric haunts everywhere, there's not a door  
Her thin form hath not glided through, no stone  
Upon the chequer'd marble where her foot  
Hath never glanc'd, no window whence her eyes  
Have never gaz'd for him; the walls have heard  
Her voice; her touch, now deathly cold, hath been  
Warm on so many things; there hangs, even now,  
The lute, from whence those harmonies she drew,  
So spherelike sweet, they seem'd to drop from heaven.  
There, where the fox came starting out but now,  
There, circled with her infants, did she sit:  
And here the bridal couch, the couch of love,  
A little while, and then the bed of death.  
And lo that holy scroll of parchment, stamp'd  
With many a sentence of the word of God,  
Still open, Samor could not choose but read  
In large and brilliant characters emblaz'd,  
The Preacher's "Vanity of vanities."

How like is grief to pleasure ! here to stay 410  
One day, one night, to see the eve sink down  
Into the water, with its wonted fall,  
'Tis strange temptation—and to gather up  
Sad relics. And the visionary night !  
How will its airy forms come sliding down, 415  
Here, where is old familiar footing all,  
'Tis strange temptation.—But the White-horse flag  
Past waving o'er his sight, at once he thought  
Of that seal'd day of destiny, when his foot  
Should trample on its neck, and burst away. 420

Oh secret traveller o'er a ruin'd land,  
Yet once more must I seek thee 'mid the drear,  
The desolate, the dead. On Ambri plain,  
On Murder's blasted place of pride. Might seem  
At distance 'twas a favour'd meadow, bright 425  
With richer herbage than the moorland brown  
Around it, the luxurious weeds look'd boon,  
And glanc'd their many-colours fleck'd with dew.  
Seen nearer, scatter'd all around appear'd  
Few relics of that sumptuous feast, the wrecks 430  
Of lifeless things, that gaily glitter'd still,



While all the living had been dark so long.  
Fragments of banners, and pavilion shreds,  
Or broken goblet here and there, or ring,  
Or collar on that day how proudly worn ! 435

A stol'n and hurried burying had there been ;  
Here had the pious workman, as disturb'd  
At his imperfect toil, left struggling out  
A hand, whose bleach'd bones seem'd even yet to grasp  
The earth, so early, so untimely left. 440  
And here the gray flix of the wolf, here black  
Lay feathers of the obscene raven's wing,  
Shewing, where they had marr'd the fruitless toil.  
And uncouth stones bore here and there a name,  
Haply the vaunted heritage of kings. 445

It was a sad and stricken place ; though day  
Was in the heaven, and the fresh grass look'd green,  
The light was wither'd, nor was silence there  
A soothing quiet ; busy 'twas, and chill  
And piercing, rather absence of strong sound, 450  
Than stillness, like the shivering interval  
Between the pauses of a passing bell.

Oh Britain ! what a narrow place confines

Thy powerful and thy princely ! that gray earth  
Was what adorn'd and made thee proud : the fair, 455  
Whose beauty was the rapture of thy maids,  
The treasure of thy mothers : and the brave,  
Whose constant valour was thy wall of strength :  
The wealthy, whose air-gilding palace towers  
Made thee a realm of glory to detain 460  
The noon-day sun in his career ; thy wise,  
Whose grave and solemn argument controll'd  
Thy councils, and thy mighty, whose command  
Was law in thy strong cities. Beauty, wealth,  
Might, valour, wisdom, mingled and absorb'd 465  
In one cold similarity of dust,  
One layer of white and silent ashes all.  
The air breathes of mortality ; abroad  
A spirit seems to hover, pouring in  
Dim thoughts of Doomsday to the soul ; steal up 470  
Voiceless sensations of eternity  
From the blank earth. Oh, is it there beneath  
Th' invisible everlasting ? or dispers'd  
Among its immaterial kindred free,  
The elements ? Oh man ! man ! fit compeer 475

Of worms and angels, trodden under foot,  
Yet boundless by the infinite expanse  
Of ether ! mouldering and immutable !

But thou, Avenger, in that quiet glebe,  
How many things are hid, once link'd to thee 480  
By ties more gentle than the coupling silk,  
That pairs two snowy doves ! hands used to meet  
In brotherly embrace with thine, and hearts  
Wherein thy image dwelt, clear, changeless, full  
As the Spring moon upon a crystal lake : 485  
Faces in feast, in council, and in fight,  
That took their colouring from thine. And thou  
Alone art breathing, moving, speaking here,  
Amid the cold, the motionless, the mute !

Among that solemn multitude of graves 490  
One woman hath her dwelling : round and round  
She wanders with a foot that seems to fear  
That it is treading over one belov'd.  
She seems to seek what she despairs to find.  
There's in her eye a wild enquiring roll, 495  
Yet th' eye is stony. Oft she stops to hear,  
Then, as in bitter disappointment, shakes

Her loose hair, and again goes wandering on.  
She shriek'd at Samor's presence, and flung up  
Her arms, and in her shriek was laughter. "Thou!  
What dost thou with that face above the earth, 501  
Thou should'st be with the rest!"—"My friend's soft bride,  
The dainty Evelene!"—"That's it, the name  
Wherewith the winds have mock'd me every morn,  
And every dusky eve—or was it then? 505  
Aye then it was, when I was wont to sleep  
On a soft bed, and when no rough winds blew  
About me, when I ever saw myself  
Drest glitt'ringly, and there was something else  
Then, which there is not now."—"Thy Elidure 510  
Sad houseless widow!"—"Hah! thou cunning man,  
'Twas that, 'twas that! and thou canst tell me too  
Where they have laid him—well thou canst, I know  
'There's deep connexion 'twixt my grief and thee.  
Thou, thou art he that wakest sleepers up, 515  
And send'st them forth along the cold bare heath,  
To seek the dark and disappearing. There  
Sound howlings at the midnight bleak, and blasts  
Shivering and fierce. And there come peasant boors



That bring the mourner bread, and weave the roof 520  
Above her, of the brown and rustling fern ;  
But never sounds the voice, or comes the shape  
She sought for. Oh, my wakings and my sleeps  
How exquisite they were, upon his breast  
I slept, and when I woke there smil'd his face." 525

Even as the female pigeon to her nest,  
All ruffled by rude winds and discompos'd,  
Returning, with full breast sits brooding down,  
And all sinks smooth around her and beneath :  
So when the image of departed joy 530  
Revisited the heart of that sad wife,  
Settled to peace its wayward and distraught,  
Sweetly she spake, and unconfus'dly heard,  
Of him the low, the undistinguish'd laid,  
Of Samor's friend, her bridegroom, Elidure. 535  
And somewhat of her pale and tender bloom  
With a faint flourishing enliven'd up  
The wither'd and the sunken in her cheek ;  
But when again alone, o'er heart and brain  
Flash'd back the wandering, recommenc'd the search  
Ever with broken questionings, and mute 540

Lip-parted listenings, pauses at each grave,  
As though it were her right, where lay her lord,  
That some inherent consciousness should start  
Within her; though 'tis nature's law, that one 545  
Cold undistinguish'd silence palls the dead,  
Yet, yet 'tis hard and cruel not to grant  
One low sound, even the likeness of a sound,  
To tell her where to lay her down and die.  
Sure there are spirits round her, yet all leagued 550  
T' abuse and lead astray, and his, even his,  
Pitiless as the rest, with jealous care  
Concealing its felt presence. Ghostly night  
Wafts her no dusk intelligence; the day  
Shews nothing with its broad and glaring rays. 555

## BOOK X.

BUT thou from North to South hast rang'd the isle,  
From Skiddaw to the Cornwall sea-beat rocks,  
One icy face of desolation cold,  
One level sheet of sorrow and dismay,  
Avenger ! thou hast travers'd, hast but held  
Companionship with mourners and with slaves.

Upon the northern rocks of Cornwall meet  
Th' Avenger and the Warrior ; thus spake he—  
“ How name ye yon strong castle on the rock ? ”  
“ Tintagel, the prince Gorlois' towers.”—“ And whose  
Yon soldiers cresting with their camp the shore, 11  
And yon embattled navy on the sea,  
Rounding their moony circle ? ” “ Mine.”—“ And thou ? ”  
“ Methinks, most solemn questioner, the helm

Might well proclaim Pendragon."—"No, the front, 15  
Whereon that scaly blazon us'd to glow,  
Had ne'er been girding with unnatural siege  
A British castle, while all Britain lay  
In chains beneath the Stranger."—"What art thou,  
That bearest in thy high and taunting vein 20  
The Princes of the land?"—"A Prince."—"Thus arm'd  
And thus attir'd!"—"Misjudging! must thou learn  
The actions are the raiment of the man,  
Better to serve my country in worn weeds  
And dinted arms like mine, than 'gainst her sons 25  
To lace a golden panoply. This rust,  
'Tis Saxon blood, for thine, its only praise  
Is its bright stainlessness. Look not, fierce Prince,  
As from my veins its earliest spots should fall,  
'Tis Britain bars the arrows that I speak, 30  
And makes thy heart its mark."—"What man or more  
Thus fires and freezes, angers and controls  
With the majestic valour of his tongue,  
The never yet controll'd, and bears the name  
Of Britain, like a shield before him, broad 35  
And firm against my ripe and bursting wrath?"



Samor ! come, honour'd warrior, to my arms ;  
Oh shame to see, and seeing not to know  
The noblest of our isle."—" No arms may fold  
Samor within them, but a Briton's ; thou 40  
By this apostate war disown'st the name,  
And leaguest dark alliance with her foes."

" Ah, then thou know'st not, in yon rock is mew'd  
The crafty kite that hath my dove in thrall.  
My dove, my bride, my sweet Igerna ; her 45  
That Gorlois with his privy talon swoop'd,  
The gentle, the defenceless, and looks down  
From his air-swinging eyrie on my wrath,  
That like the sea against that rooted rock,  
Lashes and roars in vain."—" Thy bride !"—" My bride,  
By holy words in saintly chapel spoke ; 51  
And all before, the twilight meetings stolen,  
Upon the shelly beach, when came my bark  
Sliding with smooth oar through the soundless spray  
From the Armoric shore, and vows so fond 55  
The unfelt waters crept up round our feet ;  
All after, rapturous union undisturb'd,  
Her father's blessing on our bridal couch,  
Promise of infant pledges, all o'erthrown,

All wither'd by that Gorlois, that low worm 60  
I were too proud to tread on heretofore ;  
He with some cold and antiquated plea  
Of broken compact by the sire, away  
Reft with a villain stealth th' ill-guarded gem,  
And hoards it in his lone and trackless cave." 65

" A darker and more precious theft has been :  
This Britain hath been stolen, this fair isle,  
This land of free-born Christian men become  
The rapine of fierce Heathens. Uther, hear,  
Hear, son of Constantine ! most dear the ties 70  
Of wedlock earthly woven, yet seal'd by God ;  
But those that link us to our native land  
Are wrought out from th' eternal adamant  
By the Almighty. Oh thy country's call  
Loud with a thousand voices drowns the tone 75  
Of sweet complaining even from wife belov'd—  
Forego the weaker, Uther, and obey  
The stronger duty."—" Bloodless man and cold,  
Or wrong I thee ; perchance the Saxon holds  
Thy Emeric, and my claims must cede to thine, 80  
Even as all beauties to that peerless star."—

" Spare, Uther, spare thy taunting, she is safe,

Briton or Saxon harm not her."—" 'Tis well,  
Fair tidings !—but thy shuddering brôw looks white."

" There's a cold safety, Uther, with the dead,  
There is where foes disturb no more, the grave."

" Pardon me, friend—oh pardon—but my wife,  
She too will seek that undisturbed place,  
Ere yield to that pale craven's love ; if false  
She dare not live, and yet, oh yet she lives."

Uprose the Avenger, and his way he took  
To where the rock broke off abrupt and sheer.

Before him yawn'd the chasm, whose depth of gloom  
Sever'd the island Castle from the shore :

The ocean waves, as though but newly rent  
That narrow channel, tumbled to and fro,

Rush'd and recoil'd, and sullenly sent up  
An everlasting roar, deep echoed out

From th' underworking caverns ; the white gulls  
Were wandering in the dusk abyss, and shone

Faint sunlight here and there on the moist slate.

The Castle drawbridge hung aloof, arm'd men  
Pac'd the stern ramparts, javelins look'd out

From embrasure and loop-hole, arbalist

And bowstring loaded lay with weight of shaft 105  
Menacing. On the dizzy brink stood up  
Th' Avenger, like a Seraph when absolv'd  
His earthly mission, on some sunny peak  
He waits the gathering cloud, whereon he wont  
To charioteer along the azure space ; 110  
In vain he waits not, under his plum'd feet,  
And round about his spreading wings it floats,  
And sails off proudly with its heavenly freight.  
Even thus at Samor's call down heavy fell  
The drawbridge, o'er the abyss th' Avenger springs ; 115  
Tintagel's huge portcullis groaning up  
Its groves gives way ; then up the jealous bridge  
Behind him leaps, the gate falls clashing down.

Half wonder, and half fear, Pendragon shook  
The terrors of his crest, and gasping stood, 120  
As when a hunter is gone in to brave  
The bear within his shaggy den, down peers  
His fellow through the dusk, and fears to see  
What his keen eyes strain after. But elate  
Appear'd upon the rampart that tall Chief, 125  
Seeming on th' outpour'd garrison to cast



Words potent as the fabled Wizard's oils,  
With the terrific smoothness of their fire  
Wide sheeting the hush'd ocean ; th' arbalist  
Discharg'd its unaim'd bolt, the arrow fell 130  
From the slack bowstring ; careless of his charge,  
The watchman from his turret lean'd, o'er all  
Bright'ning and stilling the high language spread,  
Giving a cast of pride to vulgar brows,  
Shedding o'er stupor and thick-breathing awe 135  
A solemn hue of glory : Far it spread  
Beyond the sphere of sound, th' indignant brow,  
The stately waving of the arm discours'd,  
Flow'd argument from every comely limb,  
And the whole man was eloquence. From cliff, 140  
From bark gaz'd Uther's soldiery, one voice  
Held in suspense the wild and busy war,  
And on the motion of his lips, the fate  
Of two strong armies hung. Anon the gate  
Flew up, the bridge lay shuddering o'er the chasm. 145  
Forth Samor comes, a Lady by his side,  
And Gorlois in the garb of peace behind.  
Tremblingly she came gliding on, and smooth,

As the west wind o'er beds of flowers, a child  
Was with her : the cool freshness of the air 150  
Seem'd o'er her marble cheek a flush unus'd  
To breathe, and human faces o'er her threw  
A modest, faint disturbance. Uther rush'd  
To meet her, ere he came her failing frame  
Seem'd as it sought some breast to sink upon, 155  
Though feebly resolute, that none but his  
Should be the chosen resting place. But he  
Severe withheld her.—“ Can the snowdrop bloom  
Untainted on the hemlock bank, near thee,  
Igerna, long hath trail'd a venomous plant, 160  
Hast thou the sullyng influence scap'd ?”—She strove  
To work displeasure to her brow, the joy,  
The fondness would not give it place : she held  
Her boy on high, she pointed from the lines  
Of his soft face to Uther's, with appeal 165  
Half rapture, half reproach, and cast herself  
With timid boldness on her rightful couch,  
Her husband's bosom, that receiv'd her in,  
Even as the opening clouds an angel home  
Returning. But the joyous boy relax'd 170

His features to a beautiful delight ;  
To the fierce Dragon on his father's helm  
Lifting his sportive hand, and smoothing down  
The horrent scales, and looking with glad eye  
Into the fiery hollow of his jaws. 175

Mute lay the armies, the pale Gorlois wrought  
His features to a politic joy, alone  
Stood Samor and aloof, he stood in tears.  
Samor, amid the plain of buried men  
Tearless, and in his own deserted home, 180  
In tears unveil'd before th' assembled camp ;  
It was so like a meeting after death,  
That union of the husband and the wife,  
So ghostly, so unearthly. Thus shall meet  
The disembodied, Emeric and himself, 185  
Not with rude rocks their footing, the cold airs  
And cloudy sunshine of this world around.  
But all of life must intervene, and all  
The long dark grave mysterious : yet even here  
It was a sweet impossibility, 190  
Wherewith at times his soul mad dalliance held,  
An earthly, bodily, sensible caress,

Even long and rapturous, as that hanging now  
On Uther's neck from soft Igerna's arms.

Upon the silence burst a voice that cried 195  
“Arthur,” whereat the child his sport broke off  
With that embossed serpent, and stretch'd out  
His arms, where, on the fragment of a rock,  
Stood Merlin. “Arthur, hail ! hail, fatal Boy,  
Bright arrow from the bow of Destiny, 200  
Go forth upon thy fiery course ! the steeds  
Are in the meadows, that shall bear thee forth,  
Thee and thy barded chivalry ! the spears  
Are forg'd wherewith in tourney and in fight  
Ye shall o'erbear the vaunting Saxon ! shields 205  
Are stamping with your bright devices bold;  
And Bards are leaning on their high-strung harps,  
Awaiting thee, to flower out in their boon  
And ripe fertility of song. Go forth,  
Strong reaper in the harvest of renown, 210  
Arthur ! the everlasting Lord of Fate  
Hath summon'd thee to thy immortal race !”

The infant clapp'd his hands, Pendragon flung  
Aloft his scaly bickering crest, her child



Igernæ folded to her heart, and wept. 215

And forward leap'd the Avenger to salute

Snowdon's dark Prophet, Merlin was not there.

Good fortune on good fortune followeth fast ;

Tidings come rapid of a Breton fleet

Seen on the southern shore ; the chiefs are past 220

To where th' Archangel's Mount o'erlooks the sea.

Oh go not to thy couch, thou bright hair'd Sun !

Though Ocean spread its welcoming breast, yet pause

'Mid that æthereal architecture wrought

Around thee by thine own creative light. 225

How broad the over-vaulting palace arch

Spreads up the heavens with amethyst ciel'd, and hung

With an enwoven tapestry of flame,

Wav'd over by long banner, and emblaz'd,

Like hall of old barbaric Potentate, 230

With scutcheon and with shield, that now unfold,

Now in their cloudy texture shift ; and paved

With watery mosaic rich, the waves

Quick glancing, like a floating surface, laid

With porphyry and crystal interwrought. 235

There's yet a sight, oh Sun ! to check awhile

Thy setting; lo, the failing breezes lift  
The white wings of that fair Armoric fleet  
To catch the level lines of light; the oars  
Flash up the spray, that purples as it falls: 240  
While wearing one by one, their armed freight  
They cast out on the surfy beach. The Kings,  
King Emrys and Armoric Hoel meet  
Pendragon, Samor, and their band of chiefs.

There meet they on the land's extremest verge 245  
To conquer, to deliver, few, but strong,  
Strong in the sinews of the soul; as rose  
The giant wrestler from his mother's breast,  
Earth-born Anteus, his huge limbs refresh'd  
For the Herculean combat, so shall ye, 250  
Kings, Chiefs, and Warriors, from your native soil  
Draw to the immortal faculties of mind  
A springtide everlasting and unchang'd.  
The armour of a holy cause outshines  
The iron or the knosped brass, and hopes 255  
And memories to the home-returning brave  
Crowding from every speck of sacred earth,  
Outplead the trumpet's wakening blast, till leaps

Vengeance to Glory's vanguard post, and leads  
The onset, and looks proudly down to see 260  
The red blood deepening round her laving feet.

Alas, that in your harvest of high thoughts,  
Thick set with golden promise of renown,  
The poppy seeds of envy and distrust  
Should take their baleful root. Slow winds along 265  
Gorlois, the sower of that noxious crop,  
Scattering it in with careless toil; now stands  
By royal Emrys' side, now mines beneath  
Pendragon's towery soul, now sadly warns  
With cautious words and dark speech broken off, 270  
Hoel, the crown'd Armorican; his looks  
Belying his feign'd confidence of speech,  
But half surmising fear, and killing hope  
By his cold care of keeping it alive.

"Not that I love not, whom all love, admire 275  
On whom the admiration of all hearts!  
Falls with such free profusion, 'tis no shame  
For us mean lamps before great Samor's light  
To wane and glimmer in our faint eclipse.  
Yet whence this fettering of all eyes and hearts? 280

This stern unsocial solitude of fame?  
True, from that fatal banquet 'scap'd he, true,  
Undaunted hath he rov'd the isle, nor doubt  
For some high purpose, that 'twere rash for us  
To search out with our dim and misty sight; 285  
Nor think, King Emrys, I thy crown assert  
Unstably set upon thy royal brow,  
But there's a dazzling in its jewel'd round  
Might tempt a less self-mastering grasp. Who holds  
The souls of men in thraldom with his tongue, 290  
Makes bridges grow before him, stony walls  
Break up to give him way,—I speak not now  
In vengeance of Tintagel, 'twas a deed  
Most worth my richest praise, that made me friend  
To brave Pendragon. But ambition wreck'd 295  
The angels, and the climbing soul of man  
Hath sinn'd for meaner gain than Britain's throne.”—

So one by one he wound his serpent coil  
Around the Chieftains' souls; and inly breath'd  
The creeping venom. But Pendragon's heart, 300  
Too fiery or too noble to suspect,  
In Samor's teeth flung fierce th' oppressive doubt.



Th' Avenger's tranquil smile was like the change  
Of aspect in a green and lofty tree,  
Touch'd by the wings of some faint breeze, nor shakes 305  
The massy foliage, nor is quite at rest,  
While languidly the undisturbing air  
Falls away and expires. "Will Emrys hold  
At midnight on St. Michael's Mount his pomp  
Of Coronation? Samor will be there." 310  
"At midnight!"—"Aye, the fires will gaily blaze,  
The silent air is meet for solemn oaths."—  
The night is starless, soft and still, the heavens  
O'erwoven with a thin and rayless mist;  
A long low heavy sound of breaking surge 315  
Roams down the shore, and now and then the woods  
Flutter and bend with one short rush of wind.  
The tide hath risen o'er the stony belt,  
That to the mainland links the Mount: where meet  
Even now the Chieftains, ocean all around, 320  
On every side the white and moaning waves.  
On the bare summit, 'neath the cope of heaven,  
The conclave stands, bare, save a lofty pile  
Of wood compacted like funereal pyre

Of a departed hero in old time  
On some Ægean promontory rear'd,  
Or by the Black Inhospitable Sea.

The crown is on king Emrys' head, his hair  
Is redolent with the anointing oil.

“Hail, King of Britain!”—Samor cried, and “Hail!”  
Replied that band of heroes; Hail! the shores  
Echoed, from bark and tent came pealing up  
The universal Hail, the ocean waves  
Broke in with their hoarse murmur of applause.

“Air, earth, and waters, ye have play'd your part,  
There's yet another element,”—cried aloud  
Samor, and in the pyre he cast a brand.  
A moment, and uprush'd the giant fire,  
Piercing the dim heavens with its blazing brow,  
And on the still air shaking its red locks.  
There by its side the Vassals and their King,  
Motionless on their shadows huge and dun,  
Show'd like destroying Angels, round enwrap'd  
In their careering pomp of flame; far flash'd  
The yellow midnight day o'er shore and sea:  
The waves now ruddy heav'd, now darkly plung'd,

Upon the rocks, within the wavering light  
Strong featur'd faces fierce, and hard-lin'd forms  
Broke out and disappear'd; the anchor'd fleet  
Were laving their brown sides in rainbow spray. 350  
No sound was heard, but the devouring flame,  
And the thick plashing waters.—“Keep your faith,  
(Cried Samor) ye eternal hills, and ye  
Heaven-neighbouring mountains!”—Eastward far anon  
Another fire rose furious up, behind 355  
Another and another: all the hills  
Each behind each held up its crest of flame;  
Along the heavens the bright and crimson hue  
Widening and deepening travels on: the range  
O'erleaps black Tamar, by whose ebon tide 360  
Cornwall is bounded, and on Heytor rock,  
Above the stony moorish source of Dart,  
It waves a sanguine standard; Haldon burns,  
And the red City\* glows a deeper hue;  
And all the southern rocks, the moorland downs 365  
In those portentous characters of flame  
Discourse, and bear the glaring legend on,

\*: Caer ruth, Exeter.

Even to the graves on Ambri plain, where woke  
That pallid woman, and rejoic'd, and deem'd  
'Twas sent to guide her to the tomb she sought. 370  
Fast flash they up, those altars of revenge,  
As the snake-tressed Sister torch-bearers.  
Th' Eumenides, from the Tartarian depths  
Were leaping on from hill to hill, on each  
Leaving the tracks of their flame-dropping feet. 375  
Or as the souls of the dead fathers, wrapt  
In bright meteorous grave-clothes, had arisen,  
And each sate crowning his accustom'd hill,  
Silent and radiant: or as th' isle devote  
Had wrought down by her bold and frequent guilt 380  
Th' Almighty's lightning shafts, now numberless  
Forth raining from the lurid reeking clouds,  
And smiting all the heights. On spreads the train,  
Northward it breaks upon the Quantock ridge,  
It reddens on the Mendip forests dark, 385  
It looks into the cavern'd Cheddar cliffs,  
The boatman on the Severn mouth awakes  
And sees the waters rippling round his keel  
In spots and streaks of purple light, each shore



Ablaze with all its answering hills; the streams  
Run glittering down Plinlimmon's side, though thick  
And moonless the wan night: and Idris stands  
Like Stromboli or Ætna, where 'twas feign'd  
E'er at their flashing furnace wrought the Sons  
Of Vulcan, forging with eternal toil  
Jove's never idle thunderbolts. And thou,  
Snowdon, the king of mountains, art not dark  
Amid thy vassal brethren gleaming bright.  
Is it to welcome thy returning Seer,  
That thus above thy clouds, above thy snows  
Thou wear'st that wreathed diadem of fire,  
As to outshine the pale and winking stars?  
O'er Menai's waters blue the gleaming spreads,  
The Bard in Mona's secret grove beholds  
A glitter on his harp-strings, and looks out  
Upon the kindling cliffs of Penmanmawr.  
Is it a pile of martyrdom above  
Clwyd's green vale? beside the embers bright  
Stands holy Germain, as a Saint new come  
From the pure mansions of beatitude,  
The centre of a glory, that spreads round

Its film of thin pellucid gold. Nor there  
Pauses the restless Messenger, still on  
Vaults it from rock to rock, from peak to peak.  
Far seen it shimmer'd on Caer Ebranc wall, 415  
And Malwyn blew a bugle blast for joy.  
The sun uprising sees the dusk night fled  
Already from tall Pendle, and the height  
Of Ingleborough, sees Helvellyn cast  
A meteor splendour on the mountain lakes, 420  
Like mirrors of the liquid molten brass.  
The brightest and the broadest and the last,  
There flakes the beacon glare, and in the midst  
Dashing the ruddy sparkles to and fro  
With the black remnant of a pine-tree stem,  
Stands arm'd from head to foot Prince Vortimer.

## BOOK XI.

MIGHTY in thy endurance, in revenge  
Mightier ! thou shak'st thy dusky patience off,  
Oh Britain ! as a snake its wither'd skin,  
That boastful to the sunshine coils and spreads  
In bright and cruel beauty. Not in vain  
Have those wild beacons rear'd their fires, thou wak'st,  
The slumber falls from thee, as dewdrops shed  
From the morn-kindling falcon's wing. On hill,  
In vale, in forest and in moor, in field  
And city, like the free and common air,  
Like the wide-spreading golden hue of dawn,  
Ranges the boundless passion uncontroll'd.  
The "Vigilance," hath drop'd absorb'd away  
From the fierce war-cry, one portending word

“ Vengeance,” rides lonely upon all the winds. 15

Alas, delicious Spring ! God sends thee down  
To breathe upon his cold and perish'd works  
Beauteous revival ; earth should welcome thee,  
Thee and the West wind, thy smooth paramour,  
With the soft laughter of her flowery meads, 20  
Her joys, her melodies. The prancing stag  
Flutters the shivering fern, the steed shakes out  
His mane, the dewy herbage silver-webb'd  
With frank step trampling ; the wild goat looks down  
From his empurpling bed of heath, where break 25  
The waters deep and blue with crystal gleams  
Of their quick leaping people : the fresh lark  
Is in the morning sky, the nightingale  
Tunes evesong to the dropping waterfall.  
Creation lives with loveliness, all melts 30  
And trembles into one mild harmony.  
Man, only harsh and inharmonious Man,  
Strews for thy delicate feet the battle field,  
Makes all thy smooth and flowing airs to jar  
With his hoarse trumpetings, scares thy sweet light 35  
With gleams of violent and angry brass.



Away ! it is a yearly common joy,  
A rapture that ne'er fails the solemn Sun  
In his eternal round, the blossoming  
And fragrance of the green resolving earth. 40  
But a fresh springtide in the human soul,  
A nation from its wintry trance set loose,  
The bursting ice of servitude, the bloom  
Of freedom in the wither'd mind obscure,  
The bleakness of the heart discomfited, 45  
And over the bow'd shape and darkling brow  
The flowering out of faded glories, sounds  
Of cheering and of comfort to the rent  
And broken by the tyrannous northern blast,  
These are earth's rich adornings, these the choice 50  
Of nature's bounteous and inspiring shows.  
Therefore the young Sun with his prime of light  
Shall beam on ensigns ; the blithe airs shall waft  
Jocund the lofty pealing battle words ;  
And not unwelcome, fierce crests intercept 55  
The spring-dews from the thirsty soil ; the brass  
For vestment the admiring earth shall wear  
More proud than all her flowery robe of green.

In all the isle was flat subjection tame,  
In all the isle, hath Freedom rear'd her, plum'd 60  
With terror, sandal'd with relentlessness :  
Her march like brazen chariots, or the tramp  
Of horsemen in a rocky glen ; and clouds  
Of javelins in her front, and in her rear  
Dead men in grisly heaps, dead Saxons strewn 65  
Upon their trampled White Horse banners : them  
Her fury hath no time to scorn, no pause  
To look back on her deathful deeds atchiev'd,  
While aught remains before her to atchieve.  
Distract amid the wide spread feast of blood, 70  
The wandering raven knows not where to feed,  
And the gorg'd vulture droops his wing and sleeps.

War hath the garb of holiness, bear proof,  
Thou vale of Clwyd, to our cold late days,  
By the embalming of tradition named, 75  
Maes Garmon, of that saintly Bishop. He  
His gray thin locks unshaken, his slow port  
Calm as he trod a chapel's rush-strewn floor,  
Comes foremost of his Christian mountaineers,  
Against th' embattled Pagans fierce array. 80

By the green margin of the stream, the band  
Of Arngrim glitter in the morning light.  
Their shadowy lances line the marble stream  
With long and level rules of trembling shade ;  
The sunshine falling in between in streaks 85  
Of brightness. They th' unwonted shew of war  
Behold slow winding down the wooded hill.

“ Now by our Gods,” cried Arngrim, “ discontent  
To scare our midnight with their insolent fires,  
They break upon our calm and peaceful day.” 90  
But silent as the travel of the clouds  
At breathless twilight, or a flock that winds,  
Dappling the brown cliff with its snowy specks,  
Foldward along the evening dews, a bell  
Now and then tinkling, faintly shrill, come on 95  
Outspreading on the meadow the stern band  
Of Britons with their mitred Captain ; front  
Oppos'd to front they stand, and spear to spear.  
Then Germain clasp'd his hands and look'd to heaven,  
Then Germain in a deep and solemn tone 100  
Cried “ Alleluia ! ” answer was flung back :  
From cliff and cavern, “ Allelula,” burst ;

It seem'd strong voices broke the bosom'd earth,  
Dropt voices from the clouds, and in the rush  
Of waters was an human clamour,\* far 105  
Swept over all things in its boundless range  
The scattering and discomfiting appeal :  
'Twas shaken from the shivering forest leaves,  
Ceaseless and countless, lifeless living things 110  
Multiplied, " Alleluia," all the air  
Was that one word, all sounds became that sound,  
As the broad lightning swallows up all lights,  
All quench'd in one blue universal glare.

On rush'd the Britons, but 'gainst flying foes, 115  
Quick smote the Britons, but no breast plate clove  
Before them, then the ignominious death  
First through the back found way to Saxon hearts.

Oh, Suevian forests ! Clwyd's vale beholds  
What ye have never witnessed, Arnglim's flight— 120  
Fleet huntsman, thou art now the deer, the herd,  
Whereof thou wert the prime and lofty horn'd,  
Are falling fast around thee, th' unleash'd dogs  
Of havock on their reeking flanks and thee,

\* Hollinshead, Book 5, Chap. 6.



The herdsman of the meek and peaceful goats, 125  
Thee, the soft tuner of the reedy flute  
Beside Nautfrangon's stony cataract,  
Mordrin pursues. So strong that battle word,  
Its holy transmutation and austere  
Works in the soul of man, the spirit sheathes 130  
In the thrice folding brass of valour, swells  
The thin and lazy blood t' a current fierce  
And torrent like, and in the breast erewhile  
But open to the tremulous melting airs  
Of passions gentle and affections smooth, 135  
Plants armed hopes and eagle-wing'd desires.  
Therefore that youth his downy hand hath wreath'd  
In the strong Suevian's knotted locks, drawn up  
Like a wrought helm of ebon; therefore fix  
His eyes, more us'd to swim in languid light, 140  
With an implacable and constant stare  
Down on the face of Arngrim, backward drawn,  
As he its writhing agony enjoy'd;  
And therefore he, whose wont it was to bear  
The many sparkling crystal, or the cup 145  
Of dripping water lily from the spring

To the blithe maiden of his love, now shakes  
A gory and dissever'd head aloft,  
And bounds in wild ovation down the vale.

But in that dire and beacon haunted night 150  
King Vortigern his wonted seat had ta'en  
Upon Caermerddhyn's topmost palace tower.  
There, the best privilege of greatness fall'n,  
He saw not, nor was seen : there wrapt in gloom,  
'Twas his soul's treasur'd luxury and choice joy 155  
To frame out of himself and his drear state,  
Dark comfortable likenesses, and full  
And frequent throng'd they this wild midnight. All  
Cloudy and indistinct lay round; the sole  
Dull glimmering like to light was what remain'd 160  
Of day, just not so utterly extinct  
And quench'd, as yet to shew splendour had been,  
And was not; the dusk simile of himself  
Delighted, royal once, now with a mock  
And mimic of his lustre haunted. Why, 165  
Why should not human glory wane, since clouds  
Put out the immortal planets in the sky?  
Why should not crowns have seasons, since the moon

Hath but her hour to queen it in the heavens?  
Why should not high and climbing souls be lost 170  
In the benighting shroud of the world's gloom?  
Lo, one inglorious, undistinguish'd night  
Gathers the ancient mountains in its train,  
While e'er the dunnest and most turbulent clouds  
Thicken upon the stateliest; but beneath 175  
The lowly and contented waters lie  
Asleep upon their weedy banks, yet they  
Have all the faint blue brightness that remains.  
Then moodier the fantastic humour grown,  
Stoop'd upon mean and trivial things, them too 180  
Wrought to his wayward misanthropic scope.  
Amid the swaying and disturbed air  
The rooks hung murmuring on the oak-tree tops,  
As plaining their uneasy loftiness.  
While, solitary as himself, the owl 185  
Sate calling on its deaf and wandering mate.  
Him at that sound seiz'd merriment, that made  
The lip drop, the brow writhe, "Howl on," he cried,  
"Howl for thy dusky paramour,"—and turn'd  
To where Rowena's chamber casements stood, 190  
Void, silent, dark of their once-brilliant lights.

Sudden around 'gan spire the mountain tops  
Each with its interwisted sheaf of flame,  
South, North, and East and West, fire everywhere,  
Everywhere flashing and tumultuous light.  
Then gaz'd the unking'd, then cried out the fallen,  
“ Now, by my soul, when comets gaze on kings  
Even from the far and vaulting heavens, 'tis faith  
There's hollowness beneath their tottering thrones;  
But when they flash upon our earth, and stare  
Close in our faces, 'tis ripe time and full  
For palaces to quake and royal tombs  
To ope their wide and all-receiving jaws.  
What is't to me? ye menace at the Great!  
Ye stoop not to be dangerous and dread,  
Oh haughty and mysterious lights! to thrones  
Low and despis'd like mine; in earlier days  
Vortigern would have quail'd, he mocks you now.  
Ye are not of the heavens, I know, I see,  
Discomfited of darkness, Conquerors  
Of midnight, ye are of the earth. Why stands  
Caermerddhyn and the realm of Dyfed black  
Amid this restless multitude of flame?  
'Tis not for idle or for fruitless show



That with such splendid violation Man 215  
Infringeth on stern nature's laws; and rends  
From night her consecrate and ancient pall;  
Samor, thy hand is there! and Vortigern  
Hath not yet learnt the patience cold and tame  
To be outblaz'd and stifled thus."—Down past 220  
The Monarch from his seat; few minutes fled,  
And lo, within that Palace all look'd red;  
And hurried with a deep confusing glare:  
And over it a vaulting dome of smoke  
Surging arose and vast, till roaring out 225  
Columns of mounting fire sprung up, and all  
Whelm'd in one broad envelopement of flame,  
Stood; as when in heroic Pagan song  
Apollo to his Clarian temple came;  
At once the present Godhead kindled all 230  
Th'elaborate architecture, glory-wreath'd  
The pillars rose, the sculptur'd architrave  
Swam in the liquid gold, the Worshipper  
Within the vestibule of marble pure,  
Held up his hand before his blinded eyes, 235  
And so ador'd: but th'unconsuming fire

Innoxious rang'd th' unparching edifice,  
But ne'er was Palace or was Monarch seen  
More in that city, one a smouldering heap  
Lay in its ashes white; how went the King 240  
And whither, no one knew, but He who knows  
All things, 'Twas frequent in the vulgar tale,  
None saw it, yet all knew them well that saw,\*  
At midnight manifest a huge arm came  
Forth from the welkin; once it wav'd and twice, 245  
And then it was not: but a bolt thrice fork'd,  
Each fork a spike of flame, burst on the roof,  
And all became a fire, and all fell down  
And smoulder'd, even as now the shapeless walls  
Lie in scorch'd heaps and black. At that same hour 250  
A dark steed and a darker rider past,  
With speed bemocking mortal steed, or man,  
Down the steep hill precipitous: 'twas like  
In shape and hue black Favorin, on whose back  
King Vortigern was wont to ride abroad; 255  
Like, surely not the same, for fire came out  
From under his quick hoofs, and in his breath,

\* Henry Huntingdon, Hist.

And sulphurous the blasted foot-tracks smelt,  
Some dinted deep in the hard rock, some seared  
On meadow grass, where never since have dews      260  
Lain glittering, never the fresh verdure sprung.

Now is the whole Isle war. But I must crave  
Pardon from those in meaner conflict slain,  
Or conquerors; Poesy's fair treasure house  
Contains not all the bright and rich, that gem      265  
The course of humankind; in heaven alone  
Preserves enroll'd th' imperishable brass,  
In letters deep of amaranthine light,  
All martyrs to their country and their God.

Oh that my spirit, holding the broad glass      270  
Of its invention, might at once condense  
All rays of glory from the kindling Isle  
Full emanating, as of old 'tis famed  
The philosophic Syracusan caught  
The wide diverging sunbeams, by the force      275  
Of mind creating to himself a right  
And property in nature's common gifts,  
And domineering the free elements.  
He that heaven-seiz'd artillery pour'd forth  
To sear the high beaks of the 'sieging fleet,      280



That burnt, unknowing whence, 'mid the wet waves.  
So I the fine immortal light would pour  
Abroad, in the long after-time to beam  
A consecrate and vestal fire, to guide  
Through danger's precipices wild, the slopes 285  
Sleepy and smooth of luxury and false bliss,  
All lovers of their country. They my song  
Embosoming within their heart of heart,  
Like mine own Samor should bear on, too strong  
To perish, and too haughty to despair. 290  
They happier, he uprearing on the sand  
A Pharos, steady for a while to stem  
The fierce assaulting waves, in after times  
To fall; they building for eternity  
Britain's rock-founded temple of renown. 295

In the Isle's centre is a champain broad,  
Now broken into cornfield and smooth mead,  
Near which a hill, now with the ruin'd towers  
Of Coningsborough (from that fight of Kings  
Nam'd in old Saxon phrase,) soars crested, Dune 300  
Skirts with her azure belt the level plain.

Morn dawn'd with all her attributes, the slow  
Impearling of the heavens, the sparkling white



On the webb'd grass, the fragrant mistiness,  
The fresh airs with the twinkling leaves at sport,  
And all the gradual and emerging light,  
The crystalline distinctness settling clear,  
And all the wakening and the strengthening sound.

There dawn'd she on a battle-field superb.  
The beauty that is war's embellishment,  
The splendour under whose quick-glancing pall  
Man proudly moves to slay and to be slain,  
How wonderful ! In semicircle huge,  
Round that hill foot, the Saxon camps his strength,  
A many-colour'd dazzling cirque, more rich  
Than the autumnal woods, when the quick winds  
Shake on them broken sunlight, than the skies  
When thunder clouds are bursting into light,  
And rainbow-skirted hangs each fold, or fring'd  
With liquid gold, so wav'd that crescent broad  
With moving fire, bloom'd all the field with brass :  
Making of dread voluptuousness, the sense  
Of danger in deep admiration lost—  
Oh beauteous if that morning had no eve !  
The Eastern horn, his tall steeds to his car

Harness'd, whose scythes shone newly burnish'd, held no  
Caswallon; he his painted soldiery,  
Their naked breasts blue-gleaming with uncouth  
And savage portraitures of hideous things,  
Human and monstrous terribly combin'd, 330  
Array'd; himself no armour of defence  
Cumber'd, as he were one Death dare not slay,  
A being from man's vulgar lot exempt,  
Commission'd to destroy, yet dangerless  
Amid destruction, against whom war shower'd 335  
All its stor'd terrors, but still baffled back  
Recoil'd from his unwounded front serene.

The centre were the blue-eyed Germans, loose  
Their fierce hair, various each strong nation's arms,  
A wild and terrible diversity 340  
In the fell skill of slaughter, in the art  
Of doing sacrifice to death. Some helm'd,  
Whose visors like distended jaws appear'd  
Of sylvan monster, some in brindled furs  
Wrapt shaggy, on whose shoulders seem'd to ramp 345  
Yet living the fix'd claws; with cross-bows some,  
Some with long lances, some with falchions curv'd.

The Arian, wont to make the sable night  
A pander to his terrors,\* in swarth arms  
He bursting from the forest, when the shades 350  
Were deepest, like embodied gloom advanc'd,  
Shap'd for some dreadful purpose, now he mov'd  
Unnatural 'mid the clear and golden day.  
Here Hengist, Horsa there amid the troop  
Wound their war-horses ; he his weapon fell 355  
Shook, a round ball of iron spikes chain'd loose  
To a huge pike-stave, like a baleful star,  
Aye gleaming devastation in its sweep ;  
Hengist begirt with that fam'd falchion call'd  
The " Widower of Women ;" over all 360  
The fatal White Horse in the banner shone.  
Round to the left Argantyr with the Jutes  
And Anglians ; these for Offa's slaughter wild  
T' exact the usurious payment of revenge ;

\* Ceterum Arii super vires, quibus enumeratos paullo ante populos antecedunt, truces, insitæ feritati arte ac tempore *lenocinantur* ; nigra scuta, tincta corpora : atras ad prœlia noctes legunt : ipsâque formidine atque umbrâ feralis exercitûs terrorem inferunt, nullo hostium sustinente novum ac velut infernum aspectum : nam primi in omnibus præliis oculi vincuntur.—Tac. Ger. 6, 43.



He sternly mindful of that broken fight 365  
 By Wye's clear stream, and his defrauded sword  
 Of its hope-promis'd banquet, Samor's blood,  
 Above the multitude of brass the heights  
 Were crowded with the wives and mothers,\* they  
 With their known presence working shame of flight, 370  
 And the high fear of being thought to fear.  
 With them the spoils of Britain, vessels carv'd,  
 Statues, and vestments of the Tyrian dye,  
 Standards with antique legend scroll'd of deeds  
 Done in old times, and gorgeous arms, and cups 375  
 And lamps, and plate, or by fantastic art  
 Minister'd to fond luxury's wayward choice,  
 Or consecrate to th' altar use of God.

And there the Saxon Gods, the wood and stone  
 Whereto that people knelt and deified 380  
 Their own hands work ; the Father of the race  
 Woden, all arm'd and crown'd ; the tempest Lord,

\*—et in proximo pignora : unde feminarum ululatus audiri, unde vagitus  
 infantium ; hi cuique sanctissimi testes, hi maximi laudatores. Ad matres,  
 ad conjuges vulnera ferunt : nec illæ numerare, aut exigere plagas pavent.  
 Cibosque et hortamina pugnantibus gestant. Tac. Germ.



The thunder-shaking Thor,\* twelve radiant stars  
His coronet, and sceptred his right hand ;  
He on his stately couch reclining : fierce 385  
In his mysterious multitude of signs,  
Arminsul; and th' Unnameable,† he fix'd  
On his flint pedestal, his skeleton shape  
Garmented scanty in a winding sheet,  
And in his hand a torchblaze, meet to search 390  
Earth's utmost, while in act to spring, one hand  
Upon his head, upon his shoulder one,  
His faithful Lion ramp'd in sculptur'd ire.  
Southward, with crescent its out-stretching horns  
Circling the foe, lay stretch'd the British camp ; 395  
The centre held King Emrys, on the right  
Pendragon, on the left th' Armoric King,  
With all his tall steeds and brave riders; they  
The fathers of that fam'd chivalric race  
Of knights and ladies, glorious in old song, 400  
White-handed Iseult, Launcelot of the Lake,  
Chaste Perceval, that won the Sangreal quest.  
But every where and in all parts alike  
'The Avenger held his post ; all heard his voice,

\* Verstegan.

† Verstegan.

All felt his presence, all obey'd his sway. 405  
As western hurricane whirls up from earth,  
And bears where'er it will, the loose-sheaf'd corn,  
The fluttering leaves, the shatter'd forest boughs,  
Even so his spirit seiz'd and bore along,  
And swept with it those proud brigades. Nor there 410  
Was not young Malwyn, he his helmet wore  
Light shadow'd by an eagle plume, so sued  
His sire, lest in the wildering battle met  
Their cars should clash in impious strife, nor sought  
The father more obedience from the son, 415  
For Britain and with Samor fix'd to war.  
And in his brown and weather beaten arms  
Came Vortimer, a pine-tree stem his mace  
That clove the air with desultory sweep.  
But by the river brows'd a single steed, 420  
Sable as one of that poetic pair,  
On the fair plain of Enna, in the yoke  
Of Pluto, when Proserpina let fall  
From her soft lap her flowers, and mourn'd their loss  
Lavish, nor for herself reserv'd her tears. 425  
The horseman, not unlike that ravisher,  
Wore kingly aspect, and his step and mien

Were as his realm were in a gloomier clime,  
Amid a drearier atmosphere, 'mid things  
Sluggish and melancholy, slow and dead. 430  
As though disclaimed by each, and claiming none,  
He lay with cold impartial apathy  
Eying both armies, as their fates to him  
Were equal, and not worth the toil of hope.

But over either army silence hung, 435  
Silence long, heavy, deep, as every heart  
Were busied with eternity; all thoughts  
Were bidding farewell to the Sun, whose rise  
They saw, whose setting they might never see,  
And all the heavens were thinly overdrawn 440  
With light and golden clouds, as though to couch  
The angels and the spirits floating there,  
While heaven the lucid hierarchy pour'd forth  
To view that solemn spectacle beneath,  
A battle waged for freedom and for faith. 445

First rose a clamour and a crowding rush  
On the hill side, and an half-stifled cry,  
" 'The Prophetess ! the Prophetess ! " was heard.  
Upon a waggon, 'mid her idol Gods,

She of the seal'd lip and the haunted heart, 450  
The aged Virgin\* sate; her thin gray hair  
And hollow eyes in a strange sparkling steep'd:  
Twice in the memory of the oldest spake  
Her voice, when Gothic Alaric had set  
His northern ensign on Rome's shatter'd walls, 455  
That day along the linden shadow'd Elbe  
She went, with bitter smile and broken song  
That mock'd at grandeur fall'n and pride in dust.  
Once more, when Vortigern in that fam'd feast  
Crown'd the fierce Hengist; in the German woods 460  
She roam'd with lofty and triumphal tone,  
Shrieking of sceptres dancing in her sight,  
And Woden's sons endiadem'd that rose  
And swept and glitter'd past her. Now with eye  
Restless, and churning lip she sate, and thrice 465  
She mutter'd—"Flight! Flight! Flight! Then look'd  
she out  
Upon the orient Sun, and cried, "Down! down!"—  
Then westward turn'd she, and withdrew her hand,

\* Vetere apud Germanos more, quo plerasque feminarum fatidicas, et  
augescente superstitione, arbitrantur deas. Tac. Hist. 4—61.



From dallying with her loose and hanging chin,  
And beckon'd to the faint remaining haze 470  
Of twilight. "Back, fair darkness, beauteous gloom,  
Back!" Still the Sun came on, the shades dispell'd.  
Then rose she up, then on the vacant space  
Between both armies fix'd her eye; half laugh,  
Half agony her cheek relax'd.—"I see, 475  
I see ye, ye Invisible! I hear,  
Soundless, I hear ye! Choosers of the slain!  
Ye of the white forms hors'd on thunder clouds!  
Ye of Valhalla! colourless as air,  
As air impalpable! wind on and urge 480  
Your sable and self-govern'd steeds; They come,  
They whom your mantling hydromel awaits,  
Whose cups are crown'd, the guests of this night's feast.  
They come, they come, for whom the Gods shall leap  
From their cloud thrones, and ask ye whom ye bring  
In stern troops crowding to their secret joy." 486  
She shook her low dropt lip, and thus went on:  
"The bow is broken, and the shafts are snapt;  
The lance is shiver'd, and the buckler rent;  
The helm is cloven, and the plumes are shed; 490

The horse hath founder'd, and the rider fallen ;  
The Crown'd are crownless, kingdomless the Kings ;  
The Conquerors conquer'd, and the Slayers slain ;  
One falls not, but he shall not stand, the axe  
Shall glean th' imperfect harvest of the sword ; 495  
The scaffold drinks the lees of battle's cup ;  
And one is woundless amid myriad wounds,  
And one is wounded where there is but one.  
Ho, for the broad-horn'd Elk that leads the herd !  
Ho, for the Pine that tops the shattering wood ! 500  
Ho, for the Bark that Admirals all the fleet !  
The herd is scatter'd, and the Elk unscath'd,  
The wood is levell'd, upright is the Pine,  
The fleet is wreck'd, the Admiral on the waves.  
That Elk is in himself a sacrifice, 505  
That Pine shall have a storm its own, that Bark  
Shall perish in a solitary wreck,  
A sacrifice of shame ! a storm of dread !  
A bitter ignominious solitude !"—

She had not ended, when a single steed 510  
Burst furious from the British line, with flight  
That had a tread of air, and not of earth.

Fierce and direct he whirl'd to the hot charge  
His youthful Rider. Upright sate the Boy  
Arthur, at first with half reverted look, 515  
As to his mother to impart his joy,  
His transport. Early, oh fame-destin'd Child,  
Put'st thou thy sickle in the field of fame.  
Over his head a dome of fiery darts  
And cross-bow bolts vault o'er th'encumber'd air. 520  
Yet forward swept the child his rapid charge,  
And all at once to rescue all the Chiefs  
Rush'd onward: Uther's dragon seem'd to sear  
The winds with its hot waving, Emrys struck  
His coursers reeking flanks, his weapon huge 525  
Rear'd Vortimer, and Malwyn's wheels 'gan whirl.  
And on the other side Argantyr tall,  
Hengist and Horsa, all the titled brave,  
Burst from their tardy lines, that vast behind  
Came rolling in tumultuous order on; 530  
As when at spring time under the cold pole  
Two islands high of ice warp heavy and huge  
Upon the contrary currents, first th'assault  
The promontories break, till meet the whole

With one long crash, that wakes the silence, there 535  
Seated since time was born, far off and wide  
Rock'd by the conflict fierce old ocean boils.

Still th' upright Child seem'd only to rejoice  
In the curvettings of his wanton steed,  
And in the mingled dazzling of bright arms. 540  
But over him a shield is spread, before  
A sword is wav'd, on every side the shield  
Dashes rude death aside, whirls every where  
The rapid and unwearied sword ; the rein  
Of the fleet steed hath Samor grasp'd, and guides 545  
Amid the turmoil. As when the eagle sire  
Up in the sunshine leads his daring young,  
Sometimes the dusk shade of his wing spreads o'er,  
And soft and broken in through the thick plumes  
Gleams the unblinding splendour. So secure 550  
Wag'd that fair Child his early war. But wild  
The wavering fray rock'd to and fro, and burnt  
Like one huge furnace the quick-flashing plain.  
Ever as 'twere the same the Apostle saw  
In the Apocalypse, Death's own pale steed, 555  
Over the broad fight shook the White Horse, spread



Where'er its gleaming lighten'd the dun gloom,  
Steamy and vast the curdling slaughter pools:  
And such confusion burst around of lines  
Mingling and interchanging, Valour found 560  
No space for proud selection, forc'd to strike  
What cumber'd and obstructed its free path,  
To hew out through a mass of vulgar life  
A passage to some princely foe; twice met  
Horsa and Vortimer, Argantyr twice 565  
Smote at Pendragon, but the whirlpool fierce  
Asunder swept them, and the deep of war  
Swallow'd them; many a broad and shapeless chasm  
Was rent in either battle, but new fronts  
Rush'd in, and made the shiver'd surface whole. 570  
The sun was shut out by a sphere of dust  
That wrapt the tumult, 'twas no sight for Heaven  
That rending and defacing its prime work,  
That waste of man, its masterpiece. But far  
Th' Avenger had borne off the Child, his steed 575  
First drew his breath before Igerna's tent.  
With her soft face upon the dust she lay,  
Struggling to hush her own lament, in hope

From the fierce din of war might haply come  
Some sound of cheer and comfort ; but when full 580  
It rush'd upon her hearing, loud she shriek'd  
To drown the very noise she strove to hear.  
But when her Child's voice sounded, she look'd up  
With a cold glance which said, " That sound I've heard  
Every sad moment since he went, my soul 585  
Is sick of self-deception, will not trust  
Again, to be again beguil'd." She saw,  
And forc'd a sportive look to her sad face  
To lure him to her snowy arms. While he  
Back to the battle, as a scene of joy, 590  
Look'd waywardly, she clasp'd him to her breast  
With a fond anger, and both smil'd and wept  
A moment Samor gaz'd on her, and—" All  
All have their hopes, and all those hopes fulfill'd,  
But I, this side the grave no hope for me 595  
And no fulfilment."—Fast as sight could track  
The battle felt him in its thousand folds.

But the undistinguish'd and chance-mingled fight  
Brook'd not young Malwyn ; he his virgin shield  
Disdain'd mean blood should stain: where Hengist fought

He swept, the Saxon saw the eagle plume 601  
And turn'd aloof, and on some other head  
Discharg'd the blow for him uprear'd. But he  
Next plunged where Horsa's star-like weapon shone,  
Disastrous, shaking ruin, yet even that 605  
Glanc'd aside from the eagle plume. The Boy  
Utter'd a wrathful disappointed cry,  
And 'gainst Argantyr drove his car. He paus'd,  
And cried aloud, "The eagle plume," and plung'd  
Elsewhere for victims. That Pendragon heard, 610  
Even as he toil'd the third time to make way  
Amid' the circling slain to the Anglian crest,  
And taunting thus,—“Methinks the eagle plume  
Hath some few feathers of the dove, so soft  
Spreads its peace-breathing influence.” But the Youth,  
“Ha, Father! thus, thus guil'st thou to a faint 616  
And infamous security thy son?  
Thus enviest thou a noble foe? thus guard'st  
With a base privilege from peril? Off,  
Coward distinction! off, faint-hearted sign!”  
And helm and plume away he rent, his hair 620  
Curl'd down his shoulders, radiant on his brow.

The beauty of his anger shone, the pride  
Of winning thus a right to glorious death.  
Then set he forth on his bold quest again 625  
Impatient. Him Prince Vortimer beheld  
Sweeping between himself and Horsa, met  
Their sea-shore fight by Thanet to renew;  
But something of his sister in his face,  
Something of Lilian harden'd and grown fierce, 630  
As that ungodly creed were true, and she  
Familiar to rude deeds of blood, had come  
One of Valhalla's airy sisters hence  
To summon him she lov'd. That gleam of her,  
That though ungentle and unfeminine touch, 635  
Exquisite, in 'mid air his rugged mace  
Suspended; but fierce Horsa on the Boy,  
Just on his neck let fall the fatal spikes,  
And him the affrighted steeds bore off. But then  
Began a combat over which Death seem'd 640  
To hover, as of one assur'd, in hope  
Of both for victims at his godless shrine.

Then wounded and bareheaded Malwyn urged  
On Hengist his remaster'd steeds, the scythe



Ras'd his majestic war horse. But aside 645  
He sprung, and flank'd the chariot ; long the strife,  
Long, though unequal, like a serpent's tongue  
Vibrated Malwyn's battle axe, twice bow'd  
The Monarch to his saddle bow.—'Twas fame  
More splendid, thus with Hengist to have fought 650  
Than to have conquer'd hosts of meaner men.  
Heavy at length and fatal glided in  
The wily Chief's eluding falchion stroke ;  
Fast flew the steeds, the master lay behind,  
Dragging with his face downward, still the reins 655  
Cling in his cold and failing fingers, trail  
His neck and spread locks in the humid dust,  
His sharp arms character the yielding sand.  
On fly they, him at length deserting mute  
And gasping on the bank, their hot hoofs plunge 660  
Into the limpid Dune, and to the wood  
Rove on. It chanc'd erewhile that thither came  
To freshen with the water his spent steeds,  
And lave the clogging carnage from his wheels,  
Caswallon, he his huge and weary length 665  
Cast for brief rest upon the bank ; a groan

Came from a helmless head that in the grass,  
Lay undistinguish'd. " 'Tis a Briton," cried  
Caswallon, " cast the carrion off to feed  
The dogs and kites, that thus irreverent breaks 670  
Upon its monarch's rest." Even as a flower,  
Poppy or hyacinth, on its broken stem,  
Languidly raises its encumber'd head,  
And turns it to the gentle evening sun,  
So feebly rose, so turn'd that Boy his face 675  
Unto the well-known voice ; twice rais'd his head,  
Twice it fell back in powerless heaviness ;  
Even at that moment from the dark wood came,  
Lured by their partners in the stall and field,  
His chariot coursers, heavily behind 680  
Dragging the vacant car, loose hung the reins,  
And mournfulness and dull disorder slack'd  
The spirit of their tread. Caswallon knew,  
And he leap'd up ; the Boy his bloodless lips  
With a long effort opened. — " Was it well, 685  
Father, at this my first, my earliest fight,  
To mock me with a baffled hope of fame?  
Well was it to defraud me of my right

To noble death ?"—and speaking thus he died.

Above him his convuls'd unconscious hands 690  
Horribly with his rough black beard at play,  
Wrenching and twisting off the rooted locks,  
Yet senseless of the pain, the Father lean'd.  
Then leap'd he up, with cool and jealous care  
Within his chariot plac'd the lifeless corpse, 695  
And with his lash fierce rent the half-unyok'd  
Half-harness'd steeds ; disorderly and swift  
As with their master's ire instinct they flew,  
Making a wide road through the hurtling fray:  
Briton or Saxon, friend or foe alike, 700  
Kinsman or stranger, one wide enmity  
'Gainst general humankind, one infinite  
And undistinguishing lust of carnage fill'd  
The Master and the Horses ; so wild groans  
Follow'd where'er he moved, 'twas all to him, 795  
So slaughter dripp'd and reek'd from the chok'd scythes.  
The low lay mow'd like the spring grass, down swept  
On th' eminent, like lightning on the oaks,  
His battle axe, each time it fell, each time  
A life was gone, each time a hideous laugh 710

Shone on the Slayer's cheek and writhing lip ;  
As in the Oriental wars where meet  
Sultan and Omrah, under his broad tower  
Moves stately the huge Elephant, a shaft  
Haply casts down his friendly rider, wont 715  
To lead him to the tank, whose children shar'd  
With him their feast of fruits : awhile he droops  
Affectionate his loose and moaning trunk :  
Then in his grief and vengeance bursts, and bears  
In his feet's trampling rout and disarray 720  
To either army, ranks give way, and troops  
Scatter, while swaying on his heaving back  
His tottering tower, he shakes the sandy plain.  
Meanwhile had risen a conflict high and fierce  
For Britain's royal banner ; Hengist here, 725  
Argantyr, the Vikinger, Hermingard,  
And other Chiefs. But there th' Armoric King,  
Emrys and Uther, with the Avenger stood,  
An iron wall against their inroad ; turn'd  
Samor 'gainst him at distance heard and seen, 730  
The car-borne Mountaineer, then Uther met  
Argantyr, Hengist and King Emrys fought,



The rest o'erborne King Hoel; one had slain  
The standard bearer, and all arms at once  
Seiz'd as it fell, all foreign and all foes. 735  
When lo, that sable Warrior, that retir'd  
And careless had look'd on, upon his steed  
And in the battle, like a thundercloud  
He came, and like a thundercloud he burst,  
Black, cold, and sullen, conquering without pride 740  
And slaying without triumph; three that grasp'd  
The standard came at once to earth, while he  
Over his head with kingly motion sway'd  
The bright redeemed ensign, and as fell  
The shaken sunlight radiant o'er his brow, 745  
Pride came about him, and with voice like joy  
He cried aloud, "Arles! Arles!"—and shook his sword,  
"Thou'st won me once a royal crown, and now  
Shalt win a royal sepulchre."—The sword  
Perform'd its fatal duty, down they fell 750  
Before him, Jute and Saxon, nameless men  
And Chieftains; what though wounds he scorn'd to ward,  
Nor seem'd to feel, show'r'd on him, and his blood  
Ooz'd manifest, still he slew, still cried, "Arles! Arles!"

Still in the splendour the wav'd standard spread 755  
Stood glorying the arm'd darkness of his form ;  
Stood from his wounded steed dismounted, stood  
Amid an area of dead men, himself  
About to die, none daring an assault,  
He powerless of assailing. But the crown 760  
That on the flag-staff gleam'd, he wrench'd away,  
And on his crest with calm solicitude  
Plac'd it, then planting 'mid the high-heap'd slain  
The standard, to o'ercanopy his sleep,  
As one upon his nightly couch of down 765  
Composes quietly his weary head,  
So royally he laid him down to die.—

But now was every fight broke off, a pause  
Seiz'd all the battle, one vast silence quench'd  
All tumult ; slain and slayer, life and death 770  
Possess'd one swoon of torpor, droop'd and fail'd  
All passions, pride, wrath, vengeance, hate, dismay,  
All was one wide astonishment : alone  
Two undistracted on each other gazed,  
Where helpless in their death-blood they lay steep'd, 775  
The ebbing of each other's life, the stiff

Damp growing on of death ; till in a groan  
Horsa exhausted his fierce soul : then came  
A momentary tinge, soft and subdued  
As of affections busy at his heart, 780  
On Vortimer's expiring brow, his lip  
Wore something of the curl men's use, when names  
Belov'd are floating o'er the thought, the flowers  
On that lone grave made fragrant his sick sense,  
And Eamont murmured on his closing ear. 785

But he, whose coming cast this silence on  
Before it, as the night its widening shade,  
Curtaining nature in its soundless pall,  
An atmosphere of dying breath, where'er  
He moved, his drear envelopment, his path 790  
An element of blood : so fleet, so fast  
The power to fly seem'd wither'd, ere he came,  
Men laid them down and said their prayers and look'd  
For the quick plunging hoofs and rushing scythes :  
As when the palsied Universe aghast 795  
Lay, all its tenants, even Man, restless Man,  
In all his busy workings mute and still,  
When drove, so poets sing, the Sun-born youth  
Devious through heaven's affrighted signs, his Sire's

Ill-granted chariot, him the Thunderer hurl'd 800  
From th' empyrean headlong to the gulph  
Of the half-parch'd Eridanus, where weep  
Even now the Sister Trees their amber tears  
O'er Phaeton untimely dead. And now  
Had the Avenger reach'd the path of death, 805  
And stood in arms before the steeds, they came  
Rearing their ireful hoofs to dash him down ;  
But with both hands he seiz'd their foaming curbs,  
Holding them in their spring with outstretch'd arm  
Aloft, and made their lifted crests a shield 810  
Against their driver. He with baffled lash  
Goaded their quivering flanks, but that strong arm  
Held them above avoiding, their fore-hoofs  
Beat th' unhurt air, and overspread his breast,  
Like a thick snow-shower, the fast falling foam, 815  
Then leap'd Caswallon down, back Samor hurl'd  
Coursers and chariot, and, " Now," cried aloud,  
" Now, King of Britain, in the name of God  
I tender thee a throne, two yards of earth  
To rot on, and a diadem, a wreath 820  
Of death-drops for thy haught aspiring brow.

" 'There, there, look there," Caswallon cried, his hand



Stretch'd tow'rd his son, and in a frantic laugh  
Broke out, and echoed;—"Diadems and thrones!"  
With rigid finger pointing at the dead. 825

A moment, and the fury burst again;  
Down came the ponderous battle axe, from edge  
To edge it rived the temper'd brass, as swift  
As shot-stars the thin ether; but the glaive  
Of Samor right into his bosom smote. 830

Like some old turret, under whose broad shade  
At summer noon the shepherd oft his flock  
Hath driven, and in the friendly cool rejoic'd,  
Suddenly, violently, from its base  
Push'd by the winter floods, he fell; his look 835

Yet had its savage blasphemy: he felt  
More than the blow, the deadly blow, the cries  
Of joy and triumph from each army sent,  
Vaunting and loud; to him to die was nought,  
He could not brook the shame of being slain. 840

But other thoughts arose; hardly he crept  
To where dead Malwyn from the car hung down,  
Felt on his face the cold depending hand,  
And with a smile half joy, half anguish died.

Th' Avenger knelt, his heart too full for prayer, 845  
Knelt, and held up his conquering sword to heaven,  
Yet spake not. But the battle, as set free,  
Its rugged game renew'd, nor equal now  
Nor now unbroken, Flight and shameful Rout  
Here scattered, Victory there and Pride array'd, 850  
And mass'd in comely files and full square troops  
Bore onward. Mountaineer and German break  
Around the hill foot, and like ebbing waves  
Disperse away. Argantyr, Hengist move  
In the recoiling flood reluctant. Them 855  
Nought more resembled, than two mountain bulls  
Driven by the horse and dog and hunter spear,  
Still turning with huge brow and tearing up  
The deep earth with their wrathful stooping horns.

But as the hill was opened, from the top 860  
Even to the base arose a shriek and scream,  
As when some populous Capital besieg'd,  
Sees yawning her wide-breached wall, and all  
Her shatter'd bulwarks on the earth, so wild,  
So dissonant the female rout appear'd 865  
Hanging with fierce disturbance the hill side.

Some with rent hair ran to and fro, some stood  
With silent mocking lip, some softly prest  
Their infants to their heart, some held them forth  
As to invite the foe, and for them sued 870  
The mercy of immediate slaughter. Some  
Spake fiercely of past deeds of fame, some sang  
In taunting tone old songs of victory. Wives  
With eye imploring and quick heaving breast  
Look'd sad allusions to endearments past ; 875  
Mothers, all bashfulness cast down, rent down  
Their garments, to their sons displaying bare  
The fountains of their infant nourishment,  
Now ready to be plough'd with murtherous swords.  
Some knelt before their cold deaf Gods, some scoff'd  
With imprecation blasphemous and shrill 881  
Their stony and unwakening thunders. Noise  
Not fiercer on Cithæron side, th' affright  
Not drearier, when the Theban Bacchic rout,  
Their dashing cymbals white with moonshine, loose 885  
Their tresses bursting from their ivy crowns,  
And purple with enwoven vine-leaves, led  
Their orgies dangerous. In the midst the Queen

Agave shook the misdeem'd Lion's head  
Aloft, and laugh'd and danc'd and sung, nor knew 890  
That lion suckled at her own white breast.

But Elfelin the Prophetess her seat  
Chang'd not, nor the near horror could recall  
Her eye from its strange commerce with th' unseen ;  
There had she been, there had she been in smiles 895  
All the long battle ; just before the spear  
Or falchion drank a warrior's life-blood, she  
Audible, as an high-tribunal'd judge,  
Spake out his name, and aye her speech was doom.

Nor long the o'erbearing flight enwrapt thy strength,  
Argantyr ! thou amid the shattering wreck 901  
Didst rise, as in some ruinous city old,  
Babylon or Palmyra, magic built,  
A single pillar yet with upright shaft  
Stands, 'mid the wide prostration mossy and flat, 905  
Shewing more eminent. Past the Saxon by,  
And look'd and wonder'd, even that he delay'd ;  
Cried his own Anglians—" King, away, away !"  
First came King Hoel on, whose falchion clove  
His buckler, with a wrest he burst in twain 910



The shivering steel ; came Emrys next, aside  
His misaim'd blow he shook ; last Uther, him  
His war horse, by Argantyr's beam-like spear  
Then first appall'd, bore in vain anger past.

From his late victory in proud breathlessness 915  
Slow came the Avenger, but Argantyr rais'd  
A cry of furious joy, " Long sought, late found,  
I charge thee, by our last impeded fight,  
I charge thee, give me back mine own, my sword  
Is weary of its bathes of vulgar blood, 920  
And longs in nobler streams to plunge ; with thine  
I'll gild and hang it on my Father's grave,  
And his helm'd ghost in Woden's hall shall vaunt  
The glories of his son." " Generous and brave,  
When last we met, I shrink to see my sword 925  
Bright with God's sunlight, now with dauntless hand  
I lift it, and cry On, in the name of God."

They met, they strove, as with a cloud enwrapt  
In their own majesty ; their motions gave  
Terror even to their shadows ; round them spread 930  
Attention like a sleep. Flight paus'd, Pursuit  
Caught up its loose rein, Death his furious work

Ccas'd, and a dreary respite gave to souls  
Half parted; on their elbows rear'd them up  
The dying, with faint effort holding ope 935  
Their dropping eyelids, homage of delight  
War from its victims thus exacting. Mind  
And body engross'd the conflict. Men were seen  
At distance, for in their peculiar sphere,  
Within the wind and rush of their quick arms 940  
None ventur'd, following with unconscious limbs  
Their blows, and shrinking as themselves were struck.  
Like scatter'd shiverings of a scath'd oak lay  
Fragments of armour round them, the hard brass  
Gave way, and broke the fiery temper'd steel, 945  
The stronger metal of the human soul,  
Valour, endur'd, and power thrice purified  
In Danger's furnace fail'd not. Victory, tired  
Of wavering, to those passive instruments,  
Look'd to decide her long suspense. Behold 950  
Argantyr's falchion, magic wrought, his sires  
So fabled, by the Asgard dwarfs, nor hewn  
From earthly mines, nor dipp'd in earthly fires,  
Broke short. Th' ancestral steel the Anglians saw,

Sign of their Kings, and worship of their race, 955  
Give way, and wail'd and shriek'd aloud. The King  
Collected all his glory as a pall  
To perish in, and scorn'd his sworded foe  
To mock with vain defence of unarm'd hand.  
The exultation and fierce throb of hope 960  
Yet had not pass'd away, but look'd to death  
As it had look'd to conquest, death so well,  
So bravely earn'd to warrior fair as life :  
Stern welcoming, bold invitation lured  
To its last work the Conqueror's sword. Him flush'd  
The pride of Conquest, vengeance long delay'd, 966  
Th' exalted shame of victory won so slow,  
So toilsomely ; all fiery passions, all  
Tumultuous sense-intoxicating powers  
Conspir'd with their wild anarchy beset 970  
His despot soul. But he—" Ah, faithless sword,  
To me as to thy master faithless, him  
Naked at his extreme to leave, and me  
To guile of this occasion fair to win  
Honour or death from great Argantyr's arm." 975  
" Christian, thy God is mightiest, scorn not thou

His bounty, nor with dalliance mock thy hour—  
Strike and consummate!”—“Anglian yes, my God,  
Th’ Almighty, is the mightiest now and ever,  
Because I scorn him not, I will not strike.”—980  
So saying, he his sword cast down. “Thus, thus  
Warr’st thou?” the Anglian cried, “then thou hast won.  
I, I Argantyr yield me, other hand  
Had tempted me in vain with that base boon  
Which peasants prize and women weep for, life;  
To lord o’er dead Argantyr fate might grant,  
He only grants to vanquish him alive,  
Only to thee, well nam’d Avenger!” Then  
The Captive and the Conqueror th’ armies saw  
Gazing upon each other with the brow 990  
Of high arch’d admiration; o’er the field  
From that example flow’d a noble scorn  
Of slaughtering the defenceless, mercy slak’d  
The ardour of the fight. As the speck’d birch  
After a shower, with th’ odour of its bark 995  
Freshens the circuit of the rain-bright grove;  
Or as the tender argent of Love’s star  
Smiles to a lucid quiet the wild sky:



So those illustrious rivals with the light  
 Of their high language and heroic act  
 Cast a nobility o'er all the war.  
 That capture took a host, none scorn'd to yield,  
 So loftily Argantyr wore the garb  
 Of stern surrender, none inclin'd to slay,  
 When Samor held the signal up to spare. 1005

But where the Lord of that dire falchion nam'd  
 The Widower of Women? He, the Chief  
 Whose arms were squadrons, whose assault the shock  
 Of hosts advancing? Hath the cream-blanch'd steed,  
 Whom the outstripped winds pant after, borne away  
 His master, yet with hope uncheck'd, and craft  
 Unbaffled, th' equal conflict to renew?  
 Fast flew the horse, and fierce the rider spurr'd,  
 That horse that all the day remorseless went  
 O'er dead and dying, all that Hengist slew  
 All he cast down before him: Lo, he checks  
 Suddenly, startingly, with ears erect,  
 Thick tremor oozing out from every pore,  
 His broad chest palpitating, the thick foam  
 Lazily gathering on his dropping lip: 1020

The pawing of his uplift forefoot chill'd  
To a loose hanging quiver. Nor his Lord  
Less horror seiz'd ; slack trembled in his left  
The bridle, with his right hand dropt his sword,  
Dripp'd slowly from its point the flaking blood 1025.  
Of hundreds, this day fall'n beneath its edge.

For lo, descended the hill side, stood up  
Right in his path the Prophetess, and held  
With a severe compassion both her arms  
Over her head, and thus—"It cannot be, 1030  
I've cried unto the eagle, air hath none ;  
I've sued unto the fleet and bounding deer,  
I've sought unto the sly and mining snake ;  
There's none above the earth, beneath the earth,  
No flight, no way, no narrow obscure way. 1035.  
I've call'd unto the lightning, as it leaped  
Along heaven's verge, it cannot guide thee forth ;  
I've beckon'd to the dun and pitchy gloom,  
It cannot shroud thee ; to the caves of earth  
I've wail'd and shriek'd, they cannot chamber thee."

He spoke not, mov'd not, strove not : man and steed,  
Like some Equestrian marble in the courts 1042

Of Emperors ; that fierce eye whose wisdom keen  
Pierc'd the dark depths of counsel, hawk-like roved,  
Seizing the unutter'd thoughts from out men's souls,  
Wrought order in the battle's turbulent fray 1046  
By its command, on the aged Woman's face  
Fix'd like a moonstruck idiot. She upright  
With strength beyond her bow'd and shrivell'd limbs  
Still stood, and murmur'd low, " Why com'st thou not,  
Thou of the Vale ? thou fated, come ! come ! come !"

The foes o'ertook, he look'd not round, their tramp  
Was round him, still he mov'd not ; violent hands  
Seiz'd on him, still the enchanted falchion hung  
Innocent as a feather by his side. 1055  
They tore him from his steed, still clung his eyes  
On her disastrous face ; she fiercely shriek'd  
Half pride at her accomplish'd prophecy,  
Half sorrow at Erle Hengist's fall, then down  
Upon the stone that bore her, she fell dead. 1060

## BOOK XII.

OH Freedom, of our social Universe  
The Sun, that feedest from thy urn of light  
The starry commonwealth, from those mean lamps  
Modestly glimmering in their sphere retir'd,  
Even to the plenar and patrician orbs,  
That in their rich nobility of light,  
Or golden royalty endiadem'd,  
Their mystic circle undisturb'd round thee  
Move musical; but thou thy central state  
Preserving, equably the fair-rank'd whole  
In dutiful magnificence maintain'st,  
And stately splendour of obedience. Earth  
Wonders, th' approval of th' Almighty beams  
Manifest in the glory of the work.



Though sometimes drown'd within the red eclipse 15  
Of tyranny, or brief while by the base  
And marshy exhalations of low vice  
And popular license madden'd thou hast flash'd  
Disastrous and intolerable fire ;  
Yet ever mounting hast thou still march'd on 20  
To thy meridian throne. My waxen wing  
Oh, quenchless luminary ! may not soar  
To that thy dazzling and o'erpowering noon ;  
Rather the broken glimpses of thy dawn  
Visiteth, when thy orient overcast 25  
A promise and faint foretaste of its light  
Beam'd forth, then plung'd its cloud-slak'd front in gloom  
Even with such promise dost thou now adorn  
Thy chosen city by the Thames, where holds  
Victorious Emrys his high Judgment court. 30  
'Thither the long ovation hath he led,  
Amid the solemn music of rent chains,  
The rapture of deliverance ; where he past  
Earth brightening, and the face of man but now  
Brow-sear'd with the deep brand of servitude, 35  
To its old upright privilege restor'd

Of gazing on its kindred heaven. The towns  
Gladden'd amid their ruins, churches shook  
With throngs of thankful votaries,\* till 'twas fear  
Transport might finish Desolation's work; 40  
And bliss precipitate the half moulder'd walls.  
'Tis fam'd, men died for joy, untimely births  
Were frequent, as the eager mothers prest  
To show their infants to the brightening world.  
They that but now beheld the bier-borne dead 45  
With miserable envy, past them by  
Contemptuously pitying, as too soon  
Departed from this highly gifted earth.  
So they the Trinobantine City reach'd.  
Without the walls, close by the marge of Thames, 50  
The synod of the Conquerors met; a place  
Solemn and to the soul discoursing high.  
Here broad the bridgeless Thames, even like themselves  
Thus at their flush and high tide of renown,  
Swell'd his exulting waters. There all waste 55

\* Then did Aurelius Ambrosius put the Saxons out of all other parts of the land, and repaired such cities, towns, and also churches, as by them had been destroyed or defaced, &c. Holl. Book 6. Chap. 8.

The royal cemetery of Britain lay,  
The monuments, like their cold tenantry,  
Mouldering, above all ruin as beneath,  
A wide profound, drear sameness of decay.  
Upon the Church of Christ had heavily fallen 60  
The Pagan desolation, hung the doors  
Loose on their broken and disused hinge,  
And grass amid the checquer'd pavement squares  
Was springing, and along the vacant choir  
The shrill wind was God's only worshipper. 65  
Even where they met, through the long years have sate  
In Parliament our nation's high and wise.  
There have deep thoughts been ponder'd, strong designs  
On which the fate of the round world hath hung.  
Thence have the emanating rays of truth, 70  
Freedom, and constancy, and holiness  
Flow'd in their broad beneficence, no bound  
Owning but that which limits this brief earth,  
Brightening this misty state of man; the winds  
That thence bear mandates to th' inconstant thrones 75  
Of Europe, to the realms of th' orient Sun,  
Or to the new and ocean-sever'd earth,

Or to the Southern cocoa-feather'd isles,  
Are welcome, as pure gales of health and joy.  
Still that deep dwelling underneath the earth, 80  
Its high and ancient privilege maintains,  
Dark palace of our island's parted Kings,  
Earth-ciel'd pavilion of our brave and wise,  
Whose glory ere it swept them off, hath cast  
A radiance on the scythe of Death. Disus'd 85  
For two long heathen ages, it became  
The pavement of our sumptuous minster fair,  
That ever and anon yet gathers in  
King, Conqu'ror, Poet, Orator, or Sage  
To her stone chambers, there to sleep the sleep 90  
That wakens only at the Archangel's trump.  
First in the synod rose King Emrys ; he  
The royal sword of justice from his side  
Ungirding, plac'd it in the Avenger's hand,  
And led him to the judgment-seat. He shrunk, 95  
And offer'd back the solemn steel.—“ Oh ! King,  
Judge and Avenger ! who shall reconcile  
The discord of those titles, private wrongs  
Will load my partial arm, and drag to earth



The unsteady balance. Only God can join 100  
And blend in one the Injur'd and the Judge."  
But as a wave lifts up and bears along  
A stately bark, so the acclamation swell  
Floated into the high Tribunal throne  
Reluctant Samor: on his right the King 105  
Sate sceptered, royal Uther on the left.  
While all around the assembled Nation bask'd  
In his effulgent presence. 'Twas a boast  
In after ages this day to have seen  
Him whom all throng'd to see; memory of him, 110  
Every brief notice of his mien and height  
Became an heir-loom; mothers at the font  
Gave to their babes his name, and e'er that child  
Was held the staff and honour of the race.  
So met the Nation in their judgment Hall, 115  
Its pavement was the sacred mother earth,  
Its roof the crystal and immortal heavens.  
Then forth the captives came, Argantyr first,  
Even with his wonted loftiness of tread:  
Nature's rich heraldry upon his brow 120  
Emblazing him of those whose scorn the world

Bears unasham'd, by whom to be despis'd  
Is no abasement. Men's eyes rang'd from him  
To Samor, back to him—in wonder now  
Of conquest o'er such mighty foe, now lost 125  
The wonder in their kindred Conqueror's pride.  
Then said the Anglian—"Wherefore lead ye here?"  
The sternness of his questioning appall'd  
All save the Judge.—"What Briton," he replied,  
"Witnesseth aught against the Anglian Chief?"— 130  
Thereat was proclamation, East and West  
And North and South: the silent winds came back  
With wings unloaded: so that noble mien  
Wrought conquest o'er man's darkest passions, hate,  
And doubt, and terror, so the Captive cast 135  
His yoke on every soul, and harness'd it  
Unto his valiant spirit's chariot wheels.

Then spake the stately and tribunal'd Judge—  
"Anglian Argantyr! Britain is not wont  
T' inflict upon a fair and open foe 140  
Aught penal but defeat; her warfare bows  
Beneath her feet but tramples not; her throne  
Hath borne the stormy brunt of thy assault,

And dash'd it off, and thus she saith, "Return,  
Return unto thy German woods, nor more, 145  
Once baffled, vex our coasts with fruitless war.  
And thy return shall be to years remote  
Our bond and charter of security ;  
A shudder and cold trembling at our name  
Shall pass with thee, the land that hath spurn'd back 150  
Argantyr's march of victory, shall be known  
'T' eternal freedom consecrate. Your ships  
Shall plough our seas, but turn their timorous prows  
Aloof, while on the deck the Sea King points  
To our white cliffs, and saith—"The Anglian thence 155  
Retreated, shun the unconquerable shore."—  
"So nevermore shall my hot warhorse bathe  
In British waters, nor my falchion meet  
The bold resistance of a British steel,  
So wills the Conqueror, thus the Conquer'd swears." 160  
Thus spake Argantyr ; sudden then and swift  
Loftier shot up his brow, prophetic hues  
Swam o'er his agitated features, words  
Came with a rush and instantaneous flow.—  
"I tell thee, Briton, that thy sons and mine 165

Shall be two meeting and conflicting tides,  
Whose fierce relentless enmity shall lash  
This land into a whirlpool deep and wide,  
To swallow in its vast insatiate gulph  
Her peace and smooth felicity, till flow 170  
Their waters reconcil'd in one broad bed,  
Briton and Anglian one in race and name.  
'Tis written in the antient solemn Runes,  
'Tis spoken by prophetic virgin lips.  
Avenger, thou and I our earthly wars 175  
Have ended, but my spirit yet shall hold  
Noble, inexorable strife with thine.  
It shall heave off its barrow, burst its tomb,  
And to my sons discourse of glorious foes  
In this rich Island to be met: my shade 180  
Shall cross them in their huntings, it shall walk  
The ocean paths, and on the winds, and seize  
Their prows, and fill their sails, and all its voice  
And all its secret influences urge  
To the White Isle;\* their slumbers shall not rest, 185

\* The Welsh called it Inis Wen, the White Island. Speed, B. 5. C. 2.  
Some derive Britain from Pryd Cain—Beauty and White, *ibid.*



Their quiet shall be weariness, till lull'd  
Upon the pillow of success repose  
The high, the long hereditary feud."

So saying, he the bark that lay prepar'd  
With sail unfurl'd, ascended. She went forth 190  
Momently with quick shadow the blue Thames  
Darkening, then leaving on its breast a light  
Like silver. The fix'd eyes of wondering men  
Track'd his departure, while with farewell gleam  
The bright Sun shone upon his brow, and seem'd 195  
A triumph in the motion of the stream ;  
So loftily upon its long slow ebb  
It bore that honour-laden bark.—Nor pause,  
Lo, in the presence of the Judgment Court  
The second Criminal ; pride had not pass'd 200  
Nor majesty from his hoar brow ; he stood  
With all except the terror of despair,  
Consciously in fatality's strong bonds  
Manacled, of the coming death assur'd,  
Yet fronting the black future with a look 205  
Obdurate even to scornfulness. He seem'd  
As he heard nought, as though his occupied ears

Were pervious to no sound, since that dim voice  
Of her who speaking died, the silver hair'd,  
The Prophetess, that never spake untrue: 210  
As ever with a long unbroken flow  
Her song was ranging through his brain, and struck  
Its death-knoll on his soul. Nor change had come  
Since that drear hour to eye or cheek; the craft,  
The wisdom that was wont to make him lord 215  
Over the shifting pageant of events,  
Had given its trust up to o'er-ruling fate,  
And that stern Paramount, Necessity,  
Had seal'd him for her own. Amid them all  
He tow'r'd, as when the summer thunderbolt 220  
'Mid a rich fleet some storm-accustom'd bark  
Hath stricken, round her the glad waters dance,  
Her sails are full, her strong prow fronts the waves;  
But works within the irrevocable doom,  
Wells up her secret hold th' inundant surge, 225  
And th' heavy waters weigh her slowly down.

For the arraignment made the Judge a sign,  
And the first witness was a mighty cry,  
As 'twere the voice of the whole Isle, as hills

And plains and waters their abhorrence spake ;      230  
Hoarse harmony of imprecation seem'd  
To break the ashy sleep of ruin'd towns,  
And th' untomb'd slumbers of far battle vales.  
As if the crowd about the Judgment Court  
Did only with articulate voice repeat      235  
What indistinct came down on every wind.  
Then all the near, the distant, sank away,  
Only a low and melancholy tone,  
Like a far music down a summer stream  
Remain'd ; upon the lull'd, nor panting air      240  
Fell that smooth snow of sound, till nearer now  
It swell'd, as clearer water-falls are heard  
When midnight grows more still. A funeral hymn,  
It pour'd the rapture of its sadness out,  
Even like a sparkling soporific wine.      245  
But now and then broke from its low long fall,  
Something of martial and majestic swell,  
That spake its mourning o'er no vulgar dead.  
Lo to the royal burying place, chance borne  
Even at this solemn time, or so ordain'd      250  
From their bright-scutcheon'd biers their part to bear

In this arraignment, came King Vortigern,  
And th' honour'd ashes of his Son But still  
And voiceless these cold witnesses past on,  
Unto the place of tombs. Along the Thames 255  
Far floated into silence the spent hymn :  
And one accusing sound arose from them,  
The heavy falling of their earth to earth.

One female mourner came behind the King,  
Half of her face the veil conceal'd, her eyes 260  
Were visible, and though a deadly haze  
Film'd their sunk balls, she sent into the grave,  
Following the heavy and descending corpse,  
A look of such imploring loveliness,  
A glance so sad, so self-condemning, all, 265  
(So softly, tremulously it appeal'd)  
Might wonder that the spirit came not back  
To animate for the utterance that she wish'd  
Those bloodless lips ; forgiveness it was plain  
She sought, and one so beauteous to forgive, 270  
The dead might almost wake. And she sate down,  
Leaning her cheek upon a broken stone  
(Once a King's monument) as listening yet



Th acceptance of her prayers: nor cloister'd Nun  
Hath ever since mourning her broken vows, 275  
And his neglect for whom those vows she broke,  
Come to the image of her Virgin Saint  
With such a faded cheek and contrite mien,  
As her who by those royal ashes sate.

But lo, new witnesses; a matron train 280  
In flowing robes of grief came forth, the wives  
And mothers of those nobles foully slain  
At the Peace Banquet, them the memory yet  
Seem'd haunting of delicious days broke off.  
On Hengist, even a captive, dared not they 285  
Look firmly, as their helpless loneliness  
Spake for them, they their solitary breasts  
Beat, wrung their destitute cold hands, and pass'd.

Arose the mitred Germain, glanc'd his hand  
From that majestic criminal, where lay 290  
The ruins of God's church, and so sate down.

But Samor look'd upon the mourner train,  
As though he sought a face that was not there,  
That could not be, soft Emeric's.—“ I have none,  
I only none to witness of my wrongs.”— 295

So said he, but he shook the softness off,  
On the tribunal rose severe, and stood  
Erect before the multitude. “Thou King,  
And ye, assembled People of this Isle,  
If that I speak your sentence right, give in 300  
Your sanction of Amen. Here stands the man,  
Who two long years laid waste with fire and sword  
Your native cities and your altar shrines :  
Here stands the man, who by slow fraud and guile  
Discrown’d your stately Monarch, Vortigern : 305  
Here stands the man, hath water’d with your blood  
The red and sickening herbage of your land :  
Here stands the man, that to your peaceful feast  
Brought Murther, that grim seneschal, and drugg’d  
With your most noble blood your friendly cups.” 310

And at each charge came in the deep Amen,  
Even like the sounds men hear on stormy nights,  
When many thunders are abroad. Nought moved  
Stood Hengist, if emotion o’er him pass’d,  
’Twas likest an elate contemptuous joy 315  
And glorying in those lofty worded crimes.  
Then, “Saxon Hengist, as thy sword hath made

Our children fatherless, so fatherless  
Must be thy children !”\* And Amen knoll’d back,  
As a plague visited Metropolis 320  
Mourning the wide and general funeral, tolls  
From all her towers and spires the bell of death.

“ Thy children fatherless ! not so—not so”—  
Rose with a shriek that Woman by the grave,  
And she sprang forth, as from beneath the earth, 325  
As a partaker of, no mourner near—  
That kingly coffin. Veil fell off, and band  
Started, through her bright tresses her pale face  
Glitter’d, like purest ivory chas’d in gold.  
Between the Criminal and Judge her stand 330  
Rowena took ; him as she saw and knew  
Flush’d a sick rapture o’er her face and neck,  
A fading rose-hue, like eve’s parting light  
On a snow bank ; but from her marble brow  
She the bright-clustering hair wip’d back, and thus, 335  
“ Samor, the last time thou this brow beheld’s’t  
The moonlight was upon it, since that hour

\* The words used to Agag were applied on this occasion, according to the Welsh tradition. Robert’s Translation of the Brut of Tysilio.

The water hath flow'd o'er it, holy sign  
Hath there been left by Christian hand, and I  
Thy creed have learnt, and one word breathes it all, 340  
Mercy."—"But Justice is God's attribute,  
Lady, as well as mercy, Man on earth  
Must be Vicegerent of both stern and mild,  
Lest over-ramping Evil set its foot  
Upon the prostrate world. The doom is said, 345  
The doom must be."—"Ha! Man with heart of clay,  
To answer with that cold and stedfast mien;  
Oh, I'll go back and sue the dead again,  
There's more forgiveness in the cold deaf corpse,  
Than the warm keen-ear'd living. From that vault 350  
I felt sweet reconciliation stealing up,  
That turn'd my tears to honey dew, here all,  
All sullen and relentless on me glares.  
I ask not for myself, not for myself,  
The ice of death is round my heart, there long 355  
I've felt the slow consuming prey; I feel  
The trembling ebb of my departing life.  
That hoary head, though granted to my prayers,  
Shall never rest upon my failing knee,



The father that ye give me back (I feel 360

Ye give him, thou that bear'st the Avenger's name,

I know thee by a milder character)

That father cannot long be mine; his hands

May lay me in the grave, his eyes may weep,

For they can weep, although ye think it not; 365

Those hands ye deem for ever blood-embued,

I've felt them fondling with my golden hair,

When with gay childish foot I danc'd to meet

His far resounding horn. 'That horn shall sound,

But on my deaf and earth-clos'd ears no more; 370

No more."—"Rowena, when a Nation speaks,

The irrevocable sentence cannot change."

Then up her fair round arm she rais'd, and wrapt

Like a rich mantle round her; her old pride

As the poetic Juno in the clouds 375

Walking in her majestic ire, while slow

Before her th' azure-breasted peacocks draw

Her chariot.—"Tell me, thou that sit'st elate,

And ye, who call yourselves this British realm,

By what new right ye judge a German King, 380

Where are your charters, where your scrolls of law

Whose bright and blazon'd titles give ye power  
To pass a doom on crowned head? Down, down,  
Ye bold Usurpers of the Judgment seat,  
Insolent doomers of a sacred life,  
Beyond your sphere to touch, your grasp to seize."

"Lady, we judge by the adamantine law,  
That lives within the eternal soul of man,  
That God-enacted charter, "Blood for blood."

Exhausted she sank down upon her knees,  
Her knees that fainted under her.—"Ye can,  
Ye will not shew unto a woman's eyes  
That bloody consummation, not to mine.

Oh, thou that speakest in that brazen tone  
Implacable, the last time thou and I  
Discours'd, thy voice was broken, tender, soft,  
Remember'st thou? 'twas then as it had caught  
The trembling of the moonlight, that lay round  
With rapturous disquiet bathing us.

Remember'st thou?"—"Almost the Judgment sword  
Fell from the Avenger's failing hand, but firm

He grasp'd it, and with eyes to heaven upturn'd,  
"Oh, duty, duty, why art thou so stern?"

Then, " Lady, lo, the headsman with his steel ;  
To that dark Priest 'tis given to sacrifice  
The victim of to day—depart ! depart !  
Colours may flow too deep for woman's sight,  
And sounds may burst too drear for woman's ear."

Stately as lily on a sunshine bank,  
Shaken from its curl'd leaves the o'ercharging dew,  
Freshens and strengthens its bow'd stem, so white  
So brightening to a pale cold pride, a faint  
And trembling majesty, Rowena sate.  
On Hengist's dropping lip and knitted brow  
Was mockery at her fate-opposing prayer,  
And that was all. But she—" Proud-hearted Men,  
Ye vainly deem your privilege, your right,  
Prerogative of your high-minded race,  
The glory of endurance, and the state  
Of strong resolving fortitude. Here I,  
A woman born to melt and faint and fail,  
A frail, a delicate, dying woman, sit  
To shame ye." She endur'd the flashing stroke  
Of th' axe athwart her eyesight, and the blood  
That sprung around her she endur'd : still kept

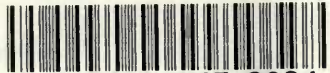
The lily its unbroken stateliness,  
And its pellucid beauty sparkled still,  
But all its odours were exhal'd—the breath  
Of life, the tremulous motion was at rest ;  
A flower of marble on a temple wall, 430  
'Twas fair but lived not, glitter'd but was cold.  
While from the headless corpse t' its great account  
Went fiercely forth the Pagan's haughty soul.

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